

PLUCK AND LUCK

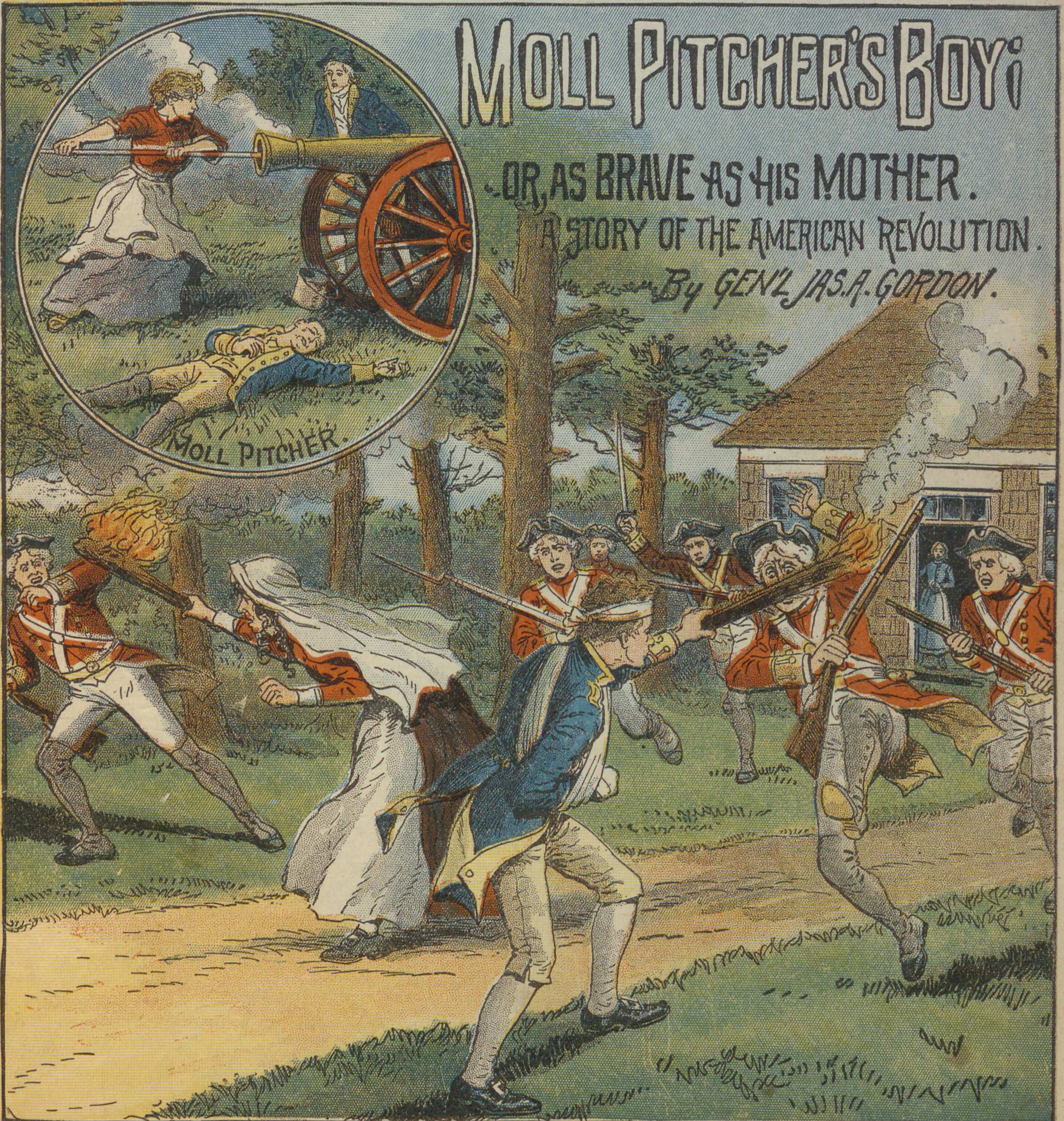
COMPLETE
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NEW YORK, APRIL 2, 1902.

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MOLL PITCHER'S BOY:

OR, AS BRAVE AS HIS MOTHER.

A STORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

By GEN'L JAS. A. GORDON.

Phil was only a few steps behind at the moment, but three of the dragoons were springing at him with their swords, while Captain Darling cried aloud: "Don't strike the prisoner, but secure him!" The daring youth let fly right and left with the burning brand.

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CHAPTER I.

WHO SAW MY BOY?

"Moll, listen to me now, as I want to have a serious talk with you."

"Don't bother me, sergeant, as don't you see that I'm in a hurry to fill the canteens for the boys, and they going into battle this morning?"

"Fill away, then, but listen to me."

"I'll hear every word you say, and I'll mind it, too, as I always do."

Thus spoke Sergeant Pitcher and his wife on an eventful morning in June when the war of the Revolution was at its height.

The soldier was seated in a tent smoking a pipe, and his wife was bustling about, filling canteens and water and whiskey, and also watching a stew simmering over a fire outside.

"I suppose you know we expect a battle to-day, Moll," continued the soldier.

"To be sure I do; but that's not what makes you look so glum, as you're not afraid, I know."

Sergeant Pitcher, as he was called, smiled a little at his wife, and then replied in serious tones:

"I can't say that I am afraid, old girl, but soldiers will fall in battle, and we will have sharp work to-day, I am thinking; but I want to give you a warning about the boy."

"What about him?"

Moll Pitcher started and faced her husband, dropping her hands beside her as she asked the question, while her sprightly face wore a serious expression on the instant.

The sergeant held up his hand in a warning manner, as he answered:

"Don't talk so loud, as you can't tell who may be listening to you. It struck me a little while ago that something may happen me in the fight to-day, and I wanted to have a serious talk with you about him."

"Nonsense! Nothing will happen you, and I never saw you troubled before when going into battle; but what about the boy?"

"Do you know where we are making for now?"

"How do I know, sergeant? What I do know is that the English rogues fled from Philadelphia, and good General Washington is chasing them along here."

"That's it, my girl. The English are retreating to New York, and General Washington is trying to cut them off."

"What has that got to do with the boy?"

"A good deal, it may be. I heard last night that Captain Darling is with the dragoons sent on here from New York to help the English general against Washington."

"Captain Darling! Captain Darling!" repeated Moll, as a scowl appeared on her comely face. "You mean old Lord Darling's son?"

"I do. He landed in New York two months ago with his company of dragoons, pretending to be very anxious to fight against the Americans, but I think I know what his real object is in coming here to America, and so do you."

Moll clenched her fist and shook it in the direction of the English camp as she growled forth:

"That I do, and I'd like to have the villain afore me now. I see what you are aiming at now, sergeant, about the dear boy, and what would you say to me?"

"I would call to your mind how we took charge of him long years ago, and the solemn promises me made then about him."

"I'll never forget that night; and haven't I been like his own mother to the brave boy? Haven't you been a father to him, I'd like to know?"

"We both did the best we could for him, and we have protected him so far," answered the soldier in grave tones, "but the trying time for him is coming now, I fear."

"Do you mean to tell me that Captain Darling suspects who he is?"

"I fear he does, Moll."

"What makes you think so? Didn't we change our name when we left the old land, and how could they track us here at all?"

"I don't know how they did it, but I fear they have, and you know I am not one to be very suspicious."

"And do you think the villains will try to kill the brave boy?"

The sergeant reflected over the question for some moments in a very serious manner, and he then answered, saying:

"I don't think thy will try that at all, but they will try to get him in their power. Do you remember the promise we made sixteen long years ago?"

"To be sure I do."

"What was it, then?"

"We promised the good lady that we would bring her boy here to America—that we would treat him as our own son, and that we would take him back to her again when he was twenty-one, providing either of us were living."

"That's it, exactly; and what did we promise if either of us should die?"

"We promised the good lady to leave the letter for the boy, telling him who he is, but not to mention a word about it to him on our lives until he was over eighteen years old, and not then, barring we were both dead."

The soldier nodded his head, and then continued, saying:

"You have it, all right, Molly, and the letter is safe with you. I only want to give you a warning now if anything should happen to-day."

"Nonsense, my brave man, as you will live to fight many a battle more after to-day."

The brave soldier sprang from his seat and shook himself, as he responded:

"Maybe I will and maybe I will not, but listen well to me."

"Sure I am listening all the time and never saying a word at all."

"Then what I have to say is this. Watch over the boy well, and see that he does not get into the hands of those who are after him."

"I'll be the death of the rogues if they come near him, so I will," exclaimed the excited woman, as she shook her clenched fist in the direction of the English camp again.

"If he should get into their hands," continued Sergeant Pitcher, move heaven and earth to get him away from them

again. It is not to their interest to injure him bodily, but they would poison his mind and use him for their own wicked purposes, which would be far worse than death to him and the good lady who loves him."

"To be sure they would, and I'll poison them if they attempt to touch my boy, good or bad."

"Here he comes now," said the sergeant, in sprightly tones, "and don't forget what may be my last warning, Moll."

"Don't be making a fool of yourself, and did I ever forget anything you ever said to me? Phil, my boy, and so you are fixed for the fight?"

The last words were addressed to a strapping youth of seventeen or eighteen, who ran into the tent as he answered:

"I am ready for fight, mother, but I'd like some breakfast in a hurry. We may get the order to fall in at any moment, as General Clinton has made a stand for it at last."

"Then sit down and I'll give you both some stew at once and some fine coffee after it," cried Moll in lively tones, caressing the lad at the same time.

Phil Pitcher, as he was called, had enlisted in a Virginia Horse regiment about a year before, and he had already acquired a splendid reputation as a daring young cavalry soldier.

He was tall for his age, which was not quite eighteen, and he could handle his sword and his horse with the best in the troop.

Before joining the cavalry regiment, Phil acted as a drummer boy with the infantry, living in the same tent with his father and mother, and he was then always known as Moll Pitcher's boy.

Moll Pitcher was far better known in the regiment than her brave husband, as she was a sutler, and supplied the soldiers with various articles, such as tobacco, whisky, and other delicacies as they could afford.

The American soldiers could not purchase many luxuries at the time, however, and they were very glad to get even food and rough clothing while battling against their rich and powerful enemies.

The sergeant and his adopted son had scarcely commenced their early meal when a trumpet blast was heard in the distance, and the two soldiers sprang up, the young man crying:

"There goes the trumpet, mother, and I must away to mount."

"Take this flask and cake with you, my brave boy, and may heaven preserve you in the fight to-day!" cried Moll Pitcher, as she clasped the lad in her arms.

"All right mother. Good-by for a while. Farewell, father, and let us give the English a fine drubbing to-day."

"We will, my boy, we will!" cried the old soldier, as he seized a flask and a cake also.

The young soldier dashed away to the front, and he was soon mounted and ready for the charge.

Moll gazed after him with loving eyes, and then turned to her husband, saying:

"What's your hurry, man, as the first drums didn't beat yet, and sure the battle won't commence until General Washington comes?"

Sergeant Pitcher served in the artillery, having charge of a gun, and he replied:

"General Lee may attack the enemy before our commander comes along, and we must have the gun ready. Good-day, Moll, and don't forget my warning."

The drums beat to arms at that moment, and the woman followed her husband some steps from the tent, as she cried out:

"I don't forget anything you ever said to me. My blessings on you, and give it hot and heavy to the English."

"We'll pepper them, never fear, but don't forget my warning, and watch over the boy while you have life and strength."

Several soldiers hastened to the tent at the time to fill their canteens, and Moll Pitcher had her hands full for the next hour or so.

In the meantime, the battle had commenced in front, and the cannon and muskets blazed forth in the deadly strife.

Moll listened now and then, and she would cast her eyes out of the tent, as she remarked to one of her customers:

"Glory be to goodness! Isn't it a pity good General Washington isn't there to smash the English altogether?"

And more than one of her customers replied:

"He is coming along with reinforcements, and we are holding our own against them as it is."

"Do you call that holding our own?" cried Moll, in indignant tones, as she saw some stragglers running to the rear.

Then out from the tent she burst, yelling:

"Back with you, you cowardly rogues, and fight like men for liberty. Do ye want the English dogs to be masters over ye again?"

Some of the stragglers did turn back again when thus upbraided by the patriotic woman, who turned to those lingering in the tent, crying:

"Shoulder your guns, you villains, and away with you out of here to fall in where you belong, and fight to the death. I'll wager you my brave husband and me darling boy will not turn their backs, and it is in the front you'll find them now by gun and horse, battling for the country that gave us shelter and freedom."

The soldiers hastened away to the front, and the patriotic woman followed them some distance, as she muttered aloud:

"Bad cess to me if I don't think the day is going against us, from what I see, and may Heaven send General Washington here soon. Where are you going, you cowardly blackguards?"

The question was addressed to a lot of soldiers who were flying back in disorder, some of them showing wounds they had received in the fight.

"Oh, Moll, Moll!" answered one of them, whose right arm was hanging helpless by his side, "the battle is lost, and the sergeant lies dead beside his gun!"

A yell of rage and anguish burst from the patriotic woman, as she dashed on to the front, crying:

"My brave man dead beside his gun, and the murdering English beating us this way? By the powers above, but they won't have it all their own way while Moll Pitcher has a hand to raise against them."

On through the stragglers and through the brave men who were holding their ground dashed the heroic woman, her hair flying in disorder over her neck and shoulders.

Guided by the reports of the cannon in front, the brave creature pressed on and on until she was in the midst of the battle and standing beside the gun where her gallant husband had fallen in defense of his adopted land.

Bending down over the dead soldier for a moment, one sob only escaped from the devoted woman, as she muttered aloud:

"He did give me his last warning, and now to show the English that they won't have it all their own way."

Springing to her feet and staring around for a moment, Moll Pitcher cried:

"I'll take my husband's place at the gun. Give me a hand, my boys, and we'll blaze away at them again!"

The gun had been silent for some minutes, as the men working it had been either killed or wounded.

Inspired by the example of the heroic woman, two soldiers sprang to her assistance, one of them crying:

"Hurrah for Moll Pitcher! Who will retreat now when a woman mans the gun?"

A wild cheer rang out from those around, while Moll seized ball and powder and rammed the charge home with all

the vigor that her dead husband could have shown, as she kept crying:

"My brave man, I'll avenge you to-day, and the English haven't won the battle yet."

Pointing her gun at the enemy, Moll took the match and applied it, crying:

"Blaze into them now, and may every ball I fire strike terror to the English dogs."

Another wild cheer burst from those near, and word was soon passed along the faltering lines that Moll Pitcher was working her dead husband's gun and fighting gloriously for liberty.

At that crisis the troops under General Lee had suffered severely while attacking the English line, and some of the regiments had been driven back in disorder.

Moll Pitcher's heroic action and soul-stirring words seemed to reanimate the patriots, however, and the stragglers rallied on all sides.

On went the struggle, and then out along the line rang a name that was dear to all, as the word was passed from mouth to mouth:

"Washington is coming!"

Washington was coming to stay the tide of defeat, and to assail the English with redoubled vigor.

With her dead husband still lying beside the gun, Moll Pitcher fought throughout the day, only turning to gaze down at his pale face every now and again as she would mutter aloud:

"The poor fellow gave me his last warning."

"All through that day Washington fought with his half-armed troops against the well-supplied veterans of England, and when night closed over the scene the Americans were masters of the field.

Begrimed with smoke and powder, weary with grief and her glorious exertions, and faint and hungry as well, Moll Pitcher rested at last to pay tribute to the heroic dead.

Slowly and sadly she walked after her husband, as friends bore the dead body back to the tent, and still her muttered words were:

"The poor man gave me his last warning, and now we will give him a fine wake."

Moll Pitcher was the heroine of Monmouth that night.

CHAPTER II.

THE SOLDIER'S LAST WARNING.

General Lee was one of the leading officers in the American army at that time, and it is well known that he was severely censured for his conduct at the battle of Monmouth.

Washington had planned for a glorious victory over the enemy, but the result of the struggle was not decisive, and General Lee was upbraided therefore.

Some accused him of cowardice, while others asserted that he was ambitious and treacherous, and that he was in league with the English to betray our country.

The erring general was removed from his command on the field of battle, and Washington compelled the enemy to fall back, if he did not achieve the great victory that he had anticipated.

Brave Moll Pitcher was seated beside the dead body of her husband that night, and several of her friends were gathered around her.

Every now and again she would rise from her seat and look out of the tent, as she would inquire:

"Who saw my boy?"

The cavalry regiment to which Phil Pitcher belonged was

encamped to the right of the line, and it was reported that it had suffered severely while making two charges on the enemy early in the day.

Moll had sent three messengers away to the camp to bring her boy to his father's wake, and none of them had yet returned.

Several officers had called on the brave woman to compliment her on her glorious work, but she did not seem to heed their praises, as she was thinking only of her dead husband and her absent boy, while she would respond to them in curt tones, saying:

"Sure, an' wasn't it my duty to take my poor man's place when he fell beside his gun?"

About nine o'clock a slight commotion took place outside the tent, and then a voice cried out:

"Here comes General Washington!"

"And is the general coming to the wake?" inquired Moll, as she arose once more and strove to arrange her hair.

Before any one could reply a stately officer of martial bearing entered the tent with his head uncovered.

The rough woman made an awkward bow to the noble man, as she stammered forth:

"You are very welcome, general; and the poor sergeant makes a fine corpse for all."

General Washington gazed at the face of the dead soldier for a few moments, and then replied in clear and solemn tones:

"Yes, he died bravely at his post of duty, and his country will remember him."

The great general then turned and looked earnestly at the modest and heroic woman, as he inquired:

"Are you the woman known as Moll Pitcher?"

"Sure and I am, good general!"

Washington bowed to the brave creature, and then reached out his hand, as he exclaimed:

The rough woman made an awkward bow to the noble man, "Brave woman, would that all the men fought as well as you to-day. I heard of your heroic conduct, and I assure you that you will not be forgotten."

Moll Pitcher hung down her head as if she had received a reprimand, and the tears sprang into her eyes, as she stammered forth:

"And, sure, general, what did I do at all, but to take the old man's place for him and blaze away at the English?"

A smile passed over Washington's grave countenance, and he responded, saying:

"You did take his place with splendid effect, noble woman, and I will not forget you."

Washington pressed the hand within his own once more, and he then turned to take another look at the dead soldier, as he remarked:

"He will be buried with honors, and his widow will not be forgotten by the country."

The grave chief was then turning to leave the tent, when Moll Pitcher addressed him, and earnestly inquired:

"Good general, did you see my brave boy at all?"

Before Washington could reply, a cavalry officer entered the tent and saluted the general.

The officer then turned to Moll Pitcher and inquired:

"To be sure he is; and why isn't he here at his father's wake, at all?"

"I am sorry to tell you, Mrs. Pitcher, that he was taken prisoner at the second charge made by the regiment this morning, after he had slain three of the enemy with his sword when we were charging through them."

"My boy a prisoner! Blood alive, and had he a sword still in his hand when he gave in?"

"He had not, I am sorry to say, as he was flung from his

horse and severely wounded, I fear, while we were cutting our way through the enemy's dragoons on our retreat."

"My brave boy wounded and a prisoner," groaned Moll Pitcher, as she turned to gaze at her dead husband. "Oh, me poor man, I mind your last warning now, and how can I save my brave boy?"

Washington had stepped out of the tent to mount his horse, and the young officer replied:

"I am Captain Hardy, commanding the troop in which your boy served. I heard of your brave actions to-day, and I assure you, for your own sake, as well as for your son's, that I will do all in my power to rescue him."

"Many thanks to you, sir, and where do you think he is now?"

"I presume he is a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, but I will soon find out for certain."

"How can you do that, sir?"

"Three of our scouts have gone out to search for him, as he was a great favorite with us all, and I hope to hear about him before morning."

"Was he badly wounded at all?" eagerly inquired the affectionate woman.

"I cannot say as to that, but I know that he was knocked from his horse by an English dragoon as he was riding by my side in the fearful charge, and we could not pull up to save him."

"Bad luck to that same English dragoon. And you say he knocked three of them over before they floored him?"

"He did. There was not a braver man in battle to-day than Private Phil Pitcher, and the best compliment I can pay him is to say that he is as brave as his mother."

The heroic woman blushed under the compliment, and then stammered forth:

"Don't be talking that way about me, sir, for sure my boy could beat three like me any day in the week."

A tall, slight man of middle age, who was dressed in plain homespun garments, entered the tent at that moment, and addressed Captain Hardy in cautious tones, saying:

"I have some news for you, captain."

"Then I will be out with you, Randy."

The stranger in plain garments left the tent, and Captain Hardy followed him, while one of the soldiers present remarked to Moll Pitcher:

"That's Randy Marvin, the best spy and scout in the whole army."

"Then I hope to goodness he has some news of my boy," answered Moll Pitcher, "and then I'll give him the finest drop of whisky he ever tasted in his life."

"I hope he has, Moll."

The impatient woman hastened out of the tent, when she saw Captain Hardy and the spy standing under a tree some distance away.

Running over toward them, she addressed the spy, and eagerly inquired:

"My good man, have you any news of my boy, good or bad, and I'll give you as fine a drop as ever went between a soldier's lips."

"He has news of your boy. But I wish you would speak a little lower, Mrs. Pitcher."

"Call me Moll Pitcher, if you please, as there is no nonsense about me, even if General Washington did shake my hand and blarney me a little. But I will speak easier, and let him tell me about my boy."

The spy smiled at the rough woman, and then answered, saying:

"Your boy is all safe for the present."

"Where is he, then?"

"He is in a farmhouse about five miles north there on the old road."

"Did you see him at all?"

"I did see him, and I would have tried to rescue him, only that he was not able to move."

"Is he so badly wounded, then?"

"He has received a pretty bad cut in the left arm and a knock or two on the head; but he will be all right in a week or so."

"Murder alive! And did you say he was a prisoner?"

"Yes, he is a prisoner; but he seems to have fallen into good hands."

"Isn't he in the hands of the English, then?"

"He is, as a troop of English dragoons hold the farmhouse where he is lying, but their captain has been very kind to him, as far as I could judge while prowling around there about an hour ago, and the people of the house are nursing him also."

"To be sure—to be sure!" responded Moll. "My brave boy was always a favorite wherever he went."

The woman then started suddenly, and glared eagerly at the spy, as she inquired:

"Did you say the English captain was kind to him?"

"He appeared to be, as I saw him talking to Phil very nicely when I peered in at the window."

"Tell me now if you know the English captain's name?"

"I heard one of the dragoons address him as Captain Darling."

A rude imprecation burst from the rough woman on hearing the name, and she then exclaimed in subdued tones:

"Mother of Moses, how queer things happen in this world. Captain Darling, Captain Darling, did you say?"

Moll Pitcher seized the spy's arm while asking the question, and he answered:

"Yes, I am certain that is the English officer's name who had command of the dragoons in the farmhouse."

"How old a man was he, and what did he look like?"

"He was a tall, good-looking young man about twenty-five, with very dark features, and piercing black eyes. I didn't like his face much, as there was something snake-like and treacherous in it."

"There is, there is! Oh, Captain Hardy, you said you would do anything to rescue my boy."

"And I say so still," readily answered the young officer.

"And so do I," responded the spy. "Phil saved my life a week ago in the bravest manner possible, and you can bet I don't forget it for him."

Moll Pitcher became still more animated, and she grasped the arm of each of the men, as she continued in the most earnest tones:

"Then I beg that you will help me in getting him out of the hands of the villain who has him now. The last words my poor husband ever said to me concerned this very rogue, and the dread he had that Phil would fall into his hands."

The spy appeared to be surprised at the woman's words, and he remarked:

"Why, it appeared to me that Captain Darling was very friendly to the lad."

"Yes, yes—the serpent," answered Moll. "Badd cess to me if I don't start out at once to save my boy from something worse than death. Where is this farmhouse at all, and is he able to mount a horse?"

"Yes, I guess he could manage to mount a horse, and I will show you the way there if you insist on going, only I have to tell you that it will be very dangerous for you if you are discovered."

"What for, at all?"

"The English took particular notice of you to-day while working your husband's gun," answered the spy, "and they already know your name from some prisoners taken by them."

"To the mischief with the English, bad luck to them, and I

am going to save my boy, if you will only show me the way there."

"One moment, good woman," said Captain Hardy, as he drew the spy aside, "as I want to get some points from our friend here."

"Hurry up, then, as I am all on fire to be away after my boy. Oh, murder, murder! To think that I can't stay at the wake to-night, and the poor sergeant to be buried early in the morning."

After consulting with the spy about fifteen minutes, Captain Hardy turned to Moll Pitcher, saying:

"Brave woman, if you will disguise yourself, my friend here will lead you to the farmhouse, and I will ask permission from the general to take a small troop of horse as an escort."

"Me blessings on the pair of you," exclaimed Moll Pitcher, in fervent tones. "And now come into the tent to taste as fine a drop of whisky as ever wet a soldier's lips."

The officer and the spy accepted the invitation, the latter saying:

"Then we'll drink to the rescue of your boy."

CHAPTER III.

"HE IS AS BRAVE AS HIS MOTHER."

About eleven o'clock that night Phil Pitcher was sitting in the kitchen of an old farmhouse situated back from the highway, and about five miles from the field of battle.

A young country girl of sixteen was standing at the door looking out into the yard, and she turned to Phil, and remarked:

"They will soon be ready now, and some of the foot soldiers are moving along the road already."

"Come here, then, if you please, as I want to speak to you very much," pleaded Phil, as he beckoned the young girl toward him.

The girl shut the door, and moved to the side of the young man, as she inquired:

"What can I do for you?"

"You can help me to escape, if you will?"

"Law me, how can you escape with the English all around the house, and their captain swearing that he will take you away to New York with them. Besides, stranger, you are as weak as water, and your arm is helpless."

"I am able to walk or mount a horse, my good girl, and I will never forget you if you will help me to get away from them."

"I'd be right willing to do it if I knew how. Hush, as here comes their captain now."

The officer described by the spy entered the kitchen at the moment, and addressed the prisoner, saying:

"Well, youngster, we are bound for the road now, and you must come along."

A deep sigh escaped from Phil, and he answered in faint tones, saying:

"Why don't you shoot me at once, and be done with it, as I am not able to ride a horse to-night?"

"Why, I don't want to shoot you, and I propose to be the best friend you ever had, Pitcher, as I have taken a great liking to you."

Phil cast a scornful glance at the speaker, as he responded:

"You have taken a great liking to me, yet you insult me by asking me to desert my colors and fight with the enemies of my country."

"Are you certain that it is your country, youngster?"

"Certainly it is. My father is an American soldier, and I will never fight under any other flag, either, you may bet your life."

"In any case, you are my prisoner, and you must march along with me," retorted the officer in ugly tones. "If you can't ride on horseback we will put you in the ambulance wagon, but you may be certain that you cannot escape by playing any tricks on us, as you will be well guarded."

"Then I will ride on horseback," said Phil to himself, "as I will have a better chance of escaping than I would on foot."

Speaking aloud, he inquired, in civil tones:

"When do you start, Captain Darling?"

"In less than ten minutes, as the infantry are passing along now, and we will bring up the rear."

A rough voice was heard outside, crying:

"Where are you going, old woman?"

"I am going in here to seek a night's shelter, and take your hand off me, you big blackguard," answered a feminine voice with an Irish accent.

"But it's against the orders, you know, and you can't go in there."

"What order have ye to keep an old woman from having a night's shelter?"

Phil Pitcher started on hearing the voice outside, as he knew at once that it belonged to the woman who pretended to be his mother, while he said to himself:

"Thunderation! If that isn't mother, and what a blamed risk to run for me!"

The woman then pushed her way into the kitchen, and Phil then noticed that she was well disguised, having all the appearance of an old hag bent doubt with age.

The pretended old woman stared around the kitchen until her eyes rested on the young girl, when she inquired:

"Where's the mistress, my purty colleen?"

"My mother is asleep upstairs," was the answer, "as she has been sick for some time."

"Then maybe you'll be after letting a poor crater stop here for the night, and me blessings be on you? Oh, how my old bones are shivering, though it isn't a cold night at all."

While thus speaking Moll Pitcher moved up to the fireplace, where some logs were burning, passing close to her boy, and she whispered to him on the sly:

"Be on the alert."

Without waiting to receive permission, the old woman seated herself before the logs, and she then turned to the prisoner, saying:

"And so you were in the battle to-day, my poor boy, judging by your arm?"

"I was, old lady."

"Don't be calling me an old lady, as sure I am a poor lone widow woman without a soul belonging to me, barring a son who is a soldier like yourself."

"Which side is he fighting on, old woman?" demanded Captain Darling.

"On the right side, of course, and what other side would a brave Irish boy be on?"

"If he is fighting with the rebels, I'd like to catch him and hang him, you old hag."

The old woman glared up at the officer as she growled forth:

"It is too much hanging the likes of you did, but you'll be paid for it before long, and I hear ye got a good dose to-day from the rebels, more power to them."

"Shut up, you old hag, or I'll have you taken out and shot," cried the officer as he advanced on the old woman in a threatening manner.

The brave woman seized one of the burning logs from the hearth, springing to her feet at the same time to strike at the wretch, as she cried:

"Take that, you Saxon thief. Follow me, my dear boy, and friends are near."

The last sentence was uttered in very low tones, as the old

woman bent her head toward her son, after having felled the officer to the floor.

Holding the blazing log aloft in both hands, the brave creature dashed to the door, yelling:

"Fire! Fire! Murder alive! Clear the way, or we'll all be roasted!"

Phil Pitcher took the hint given him by his mother, and he seized a small log in his right hand and dashed out after her, yelling:

"The house is on fire!"

The soldiers on guard outside the door fell back in alarm before the old woman and her son, while the young girl dashed out after them also, crying:

"That old woman must be crazy, as the house isn't on fire."

Captain Darling sprang to his feet, at the moment, and he drew his sword and a pistol, as he yelled:

"Seize the prisoner, and take that old woman, as she is an infernal spy."

About fifty dragoons were scattered around the yard and in the stables, holding their horses ready to mount, when the old woman dashed through them waving the burning log, making her way for a garden at the back of the farmhouse.

Phil ran after her, brandishing his torch in the wildest manner, as he cried:

"The crazy old hag has set the house on fire, and I'll knock spots out of her for it."

The old woman had just gained the garden fence when Captain Darling's voice was heard, and several of the dragoons then sprang to intercept her and the escaping prisoner.

Moll Pitcher let fly at them with the burning brand and sprang over the fence, yelling:

"What fine fun I had with the sogers, and hurrah for the Yankee lads."

Phil was only a few steps behind at the moment, but three of the dragoons were springing at him with their swords, while Captain Darling cried aloud:

"Don't strike the prisoner, but secure him."

The daring youth let fly to the right and to the left with the burning brand, and down went two of the dragoons.

Then out went the lad's right foot, and down went the third who opposed his way, while he sprang lightly over the fence, crying:

"Hurrah for the Yankees every time, and death to the English!"

Down the garden path dashed the old woman, with Phil close at her heels, while Captain Darling cried:

"Some of you pursue the prisoner, but don't fire at him. Mount and get ready, and we will ride down the road to cut them off, as they are making for the rebel camp."

Before Moll Pitcher and her boy reached the foot of the garden over a dozen men sprang up to their rescue, their leader crying:

"Give one volley to the redcoats, and then mount and away!"

The speaker was Captain Hardy, and the men under him sent a volley at the dragoons who were pursuing Moll Pitcher and her son.

In less than a minute after the brave woman and her boy were mounted on good horses and dashing along through a field with about twenty picked horsemen belonging to the young soldier's troop.

"Did you see my boy fight the dragoons with one hand at all?" cried Moll Pitcher, addressing Captain Hardy.

"Yes, I did; and I tell you again that he is just as brave as his mother, and that is saying a good deal. Close ranks, boys, as we have to cross the road down here, and the English are riding to intercept us. We must cut our way through them, if necessary."

"We'll cut our way through their whole army to-night,"

responded Moll Pitcher, "as I must get back with my boy to his poor father's wake."

CHAPTER IV.

MOLL STRIKES FOR HER BOY AGAIN.

Captain Hardy and his men, under the guidance of the spy, had to make a detour around the English camp in order to reach the old farmhouse.

On gaining that point the Americans perceived that the English were making a silent retreat under the cover of the night.

General Washington meant to attack the enemy in the morning and win a victory that would make Monmouth more famous in history, but the English general concluded that retreat was his safest policy.

On perceiving that retreat in operation, Captain Hardy and the scout were most anxious to return to the American camp with the information, but they must also rescue Moll Pitcher's boy, as that devoted woman feared that Phil would be taken away as a prisoner.

Having succeeded in rescuing the young soldier, through Moll's bold movement, Captain Hardy decided to strike for the American camp in the most direct line.

While Moll was operating the farmhouse, Randy, the spy, was prowling around close at hand and watching the movements of the retreating English.

The keen spy perceived that the English infantry and artillery were well on the move, and that their horsemen were forming to march in the rear.

By hastening back with all speed, the active man argued, Washington would still have time to send his cavalry forward to harass the enemy in their hasty retreat.

And thus it was that Captain Hardy pushed his men toward the old road.

Captain Darling, on the English side, was fearfully enraged over the rescue of the young prisoner, and he was resolved on retaking him at all hazards.

The Englishman was a brave man and a good soldier, and he had his troopers under excellent discipline, while they were all smarting over the bold trick that had been played on them by the old woman and her friends.

The horses stood ready, and into the saddles sprang the eager troopers, while out rang the captain's voice, saying:

"Charge down the road on the double-quick and cut off the Yankee rascals."

Fully fifty horsemen charged down with him, all yelling like so many mad men.

By that time the road was well cleared of the retreating foot soldiers, while the main body of the English horses moved along well in the rear so as to guard the baggage wagons in case of hasty pursuit on Washington's part.

The Americans had the start in the race for the crossing point, but the English had the inside track as well as the straight road.

Captain Hardy and the scout rode in advance of their party, with Moll Pitcher and her boy close behind them.

The brave woman rode on a side-saddle, holding the bridle with her left hand, and having a cavalry sword in the other.

Phil Pitcher had received a sword and a pistol on mounting, while his mother laughingly said to him:

"My dear boy, you can use your teeth on the bridle if you have to ply the sword in cutting through the English."

"The good horse will charge with the others, mother, and I will use my sword," was Phil's cheerful answer.

Captain Hardy was very anxious to push through the English

lines without encountering the enemy, as it was all important for him to reach the American camp with the important news as soon as possible.

On reaching a certain point, however, he perceived Captain Darling's troop dashing along to intercept them, and he turned to the intrepid scout, saying:

"We must have a skirmish for it, Randy."

"It 'pears like it, captain, but they ain't only about two to one against us, and we'll have at them in the centre, I suppose."

"That's the play. Close up in two columns, boys, and you drop in between, good woman."

"Not a drop will I fall back," answered Moll. "Stick to me side, my boy, and you'll see how I'll strike for you, if you can't manage with the one hand."

"No fear of that, mother; but you had better fall behind."

"One of my name never fell behind yet in charging on the English. Heaven be the poor the sergeant's bed to-night, and how he would glory in this work before us!"

The English had gained the point of the wood for which the Americans were making, and the latter were not more than half a field away at the time.

Captain Darling was most anxious to retake the young prisoner alive, but as he drew up his men he sang out to them:

"We have the rascals now, and we will receive them with the cold steel. Spare the young prisoner and the old hag, but cut the others down to a man!"

Moll Pitcher heard the order, and she yelled aloud:

"Don't spare me if ye can, ye villains, as I am the girl that laid some of ye low to-day with the big gun."

"Close ranks, and at them with the swords, boys!" cried Captain Hardy. "Washington and liberty is our battle cry!"

"Washington and liberty!" yelled the Americans, as they rushed down on their foes.

Over a small, stone fence leaped the good Virginia horses, and then right at the English troopers went their riders, Captain Hardy crying:

"Burst through the centre, brave Virginians, and then wheel and fire!"

"Down with the Yankee rebels!" cried Captain Darling, "and strike for King George and Merry England to the death!"

Wild shouts burst out on both sides as they closed in mortal strife, while high above the din Moll Pitcher could be heard, as she cried:

"I strike for my dear boy and the good man I lost to-day!"

And Moll did strike with a vengeance as two of the English troopers went down under her strong arm as they attempted to disarm and seize her.

Captain Darling was a cool fighter, and he kept his eyes well around him during the heat of the struggle, in search of the wounded youth who interested him so much.

Phil Pitcher was foremost in the struggle, and down went a tall dragoon who attempted to stay his progress, as he cried:

"That helps to avenge my father!"

Captain Darling heard this cry, and he made at Moll Pitcher's boy as he yelled to his troopers fighting around him:

"Secure the young prisoner and rally around me, brave English! Here comes some of our friends to aid us in slaying the Yankees."

A trumpet blast sounded at the moment from down the road.

The Americans had cut their way through the English with very slight loss, and they were dashing over the stone wall on the other side of the road when Phil Pitcher's horse stumbled and fell, flinging the half-helpless lad into the ditch.

Moll Pitcher's horse had just cleared the leap and he was dashing on with the others when Captain Hardy turned in his saddle, crying:

"Give them one volley with the pistols and then away!"

The Virginians responded with a rattling volley at their foes,

and then galloped away at full speed, across the fields, Moll Pitcher crying:

"We gave it to 'em that time, my boy, and—murder in Irish, where is my boy at all? Phil—Phil! Answer me!"

The brave woman had not missed the wounded youth up to that moment, and fearful was her anguish at not receiving an answer, while Captain Hardy drew her aside, crying:

"We must retreat now, as fresh troopers dash along in force. Don't be rash, woman, as they will hang you if taken."

Moll was striving to pull up her horse in order to return on the foes in search of her son, when Captain Hardy struck the animal on the back with his sword and sent him flying forward, as he kept crying:

"We must on to the camp. Look back and see that they are twenty to one against us now, and here they come in pursuit. On, for your life, and we will save your boy yet!"

The distracted woman was thus compelled to save her own life by flight, yet she roared out in anguish:

"My boy, my boy! To be killed or taken again after that brave fight for him!"

Fully two hundred English troopers dashed along through the field in pursuit of the Americans, firing their pistols as they rode, while their leader shouted:

"Bear down on the rascals before they can reach the Yankee camp! Cut them to pieces to a man! Spur the horses to death, but cut off the infernal Yankees!"

The "infernal Yankees" only laughed at the threat, as their fast Virginia horses bore them away with comparative ease.

It would be difficult to portray Moll Pitcher's anguish that night as she rode to her tent, but the gallant Captain Hardy consoled her by saying:

"My good woman, Washington is certain to send out in pursuit of the English, and I will be in the front rank."

"Heaven send that my boy is alive," answered Moll, "and then I will be after him soon again, you may be sure."

"Randy Marvin has started back to dog the enemy and he will soon have news of your boy, who must have been taken prisoner, as you heard what the English captain said."

"To be sure I did, and I know what the villain is up to, too well."

"Then have a little patience and we will rescue the lad."

"Sure I want patience now, and I must have it; but do you know what I mean to do, good Captain Hardy?"

"What is that?"

"I'm going to put on a suit of my husband's and ride with you again."

"If you must, come along, and I will give you a fresh horse."

And it was thus settled that Moll Pitcher should ride out in quest of her boy again.

That brave youth was insensible when the English troopers raised him from the ditch where he had fallen.

Captain Darling sprang from his horse and bent over the prisoner, as he cried:

"I trust in fortune he is not dead!"

"He's only stunned," answered one of the troopers, "as I can feel his heart beating."

"Then bear him along to the farmhouse as gently as possible. I would sooner lose my right hand than to see him dead."

The troopers bore the youth along the road, while one of them remarked:

"Dang my buttons, if the captain is not as careful about the blasted Yankee as if he was a pretty lady in disguise."

CHAPTER V.

THE SCOUT AND THE TORY.

There was another person in the neighborhood that night who was very much interested in the wounded youth.

We allude to the young girl at the farmhouse, whose name was Edith Grimes.

Edith's father was one of the most bitter Tories in Jersey, and he had made an infamous name for himself by hunting down the patriots.

The young girl, on the other hand, was true to her country, and she assisted the Americans whenever it was in her power.

While the English held New Jersey, Captain Gideon Grimes, as the Tory leader was called, robbed and maltreated his patriotic neighbors in a fearful manner, and he had enriched himself with the spoils thus obtained.

He had a band of about thirty rascals under him, each and all of whom were ever ready to commit crimes that deserved punishment by death at the hands of the patriots.

When Moll Pitcher and her boy dashed out of the farmhouse that night, with the burning logs, Edith Grimes watched them as they retreated through the garden, clasping her hands in agitation as she muttered:

"Oh, I do so hope that the poor young fellow will get away all safe!"

She then stood at the front door watching the English troopers riding away in pursuit, when a rough voice from the kitchen fell on her ear, crying:

"Where are you, gal, and I a-wanting you so thundering bad?"

Edith ran back into the kitchen, crying:

"Here I am, father!"

That father was a tall, powerful man, still in the prime of life, who had the word "brute" stamped on his face from chin to forehead.

His face was then covered with a rough, brown beard; he was dressed in the garb of a well-to-do farmer, save that he wore a belt in which a sword and a brace of pistols appeared.

Flinging a couple of heavy bags on the table the Tory captain glared at his daughter as he demanded, in rough tones:

"Did you pack up, as I told you, and be ready for the road?"

The young girl stared at the man in a frightened manner as she stammered forth:

"Dear me, father, you didn't mean for me to go to New York with you and leave mother so sick here?"

"Hang your mother! You can bet I meant it! Pack up at once and be quick about it, as the wagons will start right off."

"But who'll tend to mother?"

"Let her rebel neighbors tend to her. The great George Washington is marching along with his army, and you can't stay here."

"But, father, she is——"

"Pack up, I say, and don't give me any of your sass, or I'll give you a blamed good licking! Thunderation, is that the Yankees on us?"

The sounds of the conflict were borne along at the moment, and the Tory darted out of the back door, yelling:

"You fellows out there, hitch the horses to the wagons right smart, and one of you ride down the road to see what that fighting means!"

Gideon Grimes listened at the door for a few moments, and he then returned to the kitchen, crying:

"You blamed gal, ain't you set about getting your things ready yet? Here come the Yankees now, and we must get!"

"It is only a fight between a small party of patriot horsemen and the troopers who were quartered here, sir, and we have time enough; but you will not take me from poor mother?"

"You'd better do as I say—that's all."

The man seized the girl by the arm as he spoke and shook her in a fierce manner, while he continued, in hissing tones:

"I tell you you must come with me, as I have a game to work in New York that you must help me in. You noticed that English captain?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, he's rich and the son of a lord. I've made a pile, lately, and I'm going to take the gold and other booty to New York with us. What would you say to marrying that English captain, gal?"

"I wouldn't like it a bit."

"You git out! You'd be a great lady over in England; and you can bet I'll work it, as I hold a secret of his."

"But I don't want to leave mother."

"Darn your mother. By the way, did you see your Uncle Randy Marvin hanging around here this evening?"

"I did not."

"Well, he was. I only wish I got my hands on the tarnal spy again and I'd roast him alive! Get ready, quick, or I'll knock thunder out of you!"

While thus threatening, the rough brute flung the young girl away from him and then hastened out into the yard to push on with the retreat.

Edith hastened upstairs to her sick mother, who was then watched over by a rough, country girl named Sally Friend, whose father was serving with the patriots.

Sally was about eighteen; she was as ugly as a Hessian, as strong as a three-year-old colt, and fully as wild and as vicious.

This cunning girl was a spy on the household and on the neighboring patriots, working in the interest of the Tory leader against her father's friends, and she hated Edith Grimes.

Edith whispered some words to her mother that could not be overheard by the female spy, and Mrs. Grimes answered aloud, saying:

"It is your duty to go with your father, and Sally, there, will tend to me."

Loud voices were soon heard below, and then the Tory leader cried out:

"Are you ready yet, gal?"

Edith embraced her mother and then hastened downstairs, with a small bundle, as she replied:

"I am ready."

On reaching the kitchen the young girl started back in surprise on seeing Phil Pitcher seated on a chair, with her father and Captain Darling standing before him.

The young patriot looked at Edith for a moment, and he then spoke to Captain Darling in manly tones, saying:

"I am in your power, but I bet my friends will rescue me again very soon."

"I trust not, for your own sake, as better fortunes will be yours—in the service of your king."

"Your king is not my king, and I will live and die a rebel!"

"We'll see about that. Who was that old woman who came here after you?"

"That was my mother, the brave woman who took my dead father's place at his gun to-day. Do you think you can make a Tory of the son of such a woman?"

Captain Darling did not answer the question, but he drew Gideon Grimes aside and conversed with him in very subdued tones.

As the English scout in the rear reported that Washington was not putting his army in motion to pursue them, Captain Darling and the Tory captain did not hasten their movements.

Edith soon approached Phil Pitcher and addressed him in gentle tones, saying:

"I'm so sorry you didn't escape, stranger."

Phil felt the sympathetic eyes on him, and he responded, in wistful tones, but so low that the others could not overhear him:

"I may do so yet if you will help me."

"How can I do that?"

"I understand that you are going to New York with your father?"

"So I am."

"You are going to ride in the same wagon with me, your father says."

"Well, and if I am?"

"Haven't you an uncle named Randy Marvin?"

"I have, and he is a good man. He is mother's brother, and he was hounded almost to death here because he is on the right side."

"Then I want to tell you that Randy Marvin is my good friend. He was here to-night to rescue me, and I am certain he will come back to try it on again."

"I hope not, as father, there, has sworn to put him to death."

"Randy doesn't care for——"

"What is that jawing about?" cried Captain Grimes, as he advanced to interrupt the young folks. "Get out into the wagon, gal! Young fellow, you get into the same wagon, and you'll be all-fired smart if you escape from Gideon Grimes!"

Four country wagons were soon rolling along the road, surrounded by the Tory band.

Captain Darling rode on ahead with his men, while another party of dragoons brought up the rear.

The wagons were loaded with spoils secured by Captain Grimes and his band.

During the night Phil made one bold attempt at escaping, but the Tory captain was on the alert, and the brave young fellow was dragged back to the wagon again, Grimes crying:

"We will tie your legs now, youngster, and then try it on again."

Phil did not try it on again that night, but he was not subdued.

The wagons traveled on slowly in the rear of the English army, the scouts still reporting that Washington was not in pursuit.

On the following evening, while the Tories were resting near a small village on the road to New York Sally Friend rode in among them.

After the treacherous girl told Edith that her mother was in good hands, Captain Grimes drew her aside and eagerly inquired:

"Did you work it, Sally?"

"I came blame near doing it, but that tarnal Randy Marvin sneaked to the house as it was blazing and dragged your ole woman out of the flames."

Gideon Grimes groaned, and then swore fearfully at the patriot spy, while he inquired:

"Did he suspect you?"

"I think not, as I pretended to the old woman that I was away for brandy when the fire broke out."

"Then why did you come on after me until you tried it on again?"

"I come on to tell you that Randy is sneaking on here after you, as he is dead bent on rescuing that young rebel there in the wagon."

"Thunder he is! Well, let him come and I'll make it hot for him. Did you strike him on the road here?"

"Nary a strike, as he's too smart to take the public way I rode."

"What excuse did you give the old woman—blame her—for coming on?"

"I said as how you took my money away, and I was bound to have it."

"You're a smart one, Sall. Now, you get back in the morning and fix the old woman with a dose I'll give you; then come to New York and stick to Edith till our game is played, and then I'll make you Mrs. Grimes."

The ugly girl grasped the Tory's hand and pressed it warmly, as she replied:

"That's a go, Gideon; but if you back out I'll be all-fired down on you!"

"Nerra a back out in me, ole gal."

"Then look out for Randy Marvin, as I tell you he's a smart one."

"I know it; but I'll fix the skunk if he ventures here. Go, and be soft to Edith now, and keep your eye on the young prisoner, as he is our best card in the big game."

The Tory captain was very much troubled about the news he had received.

He hated his brother-in-law intensely, and he had reason to fear the brave spy as well.

They had been sworn enemies for year's as Randy was down on Gideon Grimes on account of the manner in which the rascal treated his wife, while the Tory responded by driving the patriot from his home when the war broke out.

Feeling uneasy that night, Gideon examined his pistols carefully and stole out of the camp, muttering to himself:

"Randy is good on the sneak game, and I'll just keep on the lookout for him."

The Tory was stealing along through a wood near a side road, when he heard a merry voice singing a negro melody, and he paused to listen as he said to himself:

"That's a nigger, and I'll just see if he saw anything of the skunk hanging around."

The Tory then sprang out on the road and confronted an old negro, crying:

"What are you doing out so late, you black thief?"

The old negro drew back in evident alarm, and then answered, in very humble tones:

"Beg pardon, massa; dis ole coon am only agowan down to de camp."

That old negro was no other than the dreaded patriot spy, and it remains to be seen if his mortal enemy would recognize him.

CHAPTER VI.

MOLL PITCHER AFTER HER BOY AGAIN.

There were slaves in New Jersey at the time of the Revolution, and the negroes in general were kept in subjection.

Gideon Grimes was a natural tyrant, and he believed in treating most men in a rough manner, out of mere wickedness.

Something in the voice or the manner of the pretended negro before him raised his ire, and he sprang forward and seized him by the throat, crying:

"You tarnal old black imp, I believe you are playing the spy on us, and you'll come right down to the camp with me."

The old fellow made a slight resistance at first, thinking that his disguise had been penetrated, but he soon became as humble as before, and he left himself pliant in the hands of the rough Tory, as he mentally said:

"What a chance this would be for killing the snake; but it wouldn't serve my purpose at present."

When Gideon Grimes found that the old negro went quietly along with him his manner changed and he stopped on the road as he said to the old fellow:

"See here, old coon, where do you come from?"

"From up the road dar, massa, as I libes wid ole Massa Jobson."

"Did you see any stranger hanging around here to-night?"

Before the question could be answered an active form sprang out from the edge of the wood and a voice exclaimed:

"Bad luck to you, ye ugly villain, and take that for abusing the old man!"

The speaker struck at Gideon Grimes while thus declaiming, and stretched him on the ground.

The weapon used was a heavy, hickory stick, and the person

using it had all the appearance of a rough Irishman of middle age.

The blow given was a very heavy one, and it stunned the Tory leader for the time.

The disguised spy bent over him on the instant, drawing a strong cord from his pocket at the same time as he quietly remarked:

"That wasn't just the game, Moll, but we'll make it work now that we got him."

The disguised woman, who was no other than Moll Pitcher, stared down at the insensible man, holding her stick ready to give him another crack, as she replied:

"On my faith, but I thought he had the best of you. And who is he at all?"

"Gideon Grimes, the infernal villain I told you about."

"Blood and thunder, I am sorry I didn't give him a harder welt while I was about it; and stand back and I'll give it to him now!"

"No, no; never strike a man when he is down. Help me to get him into the wood here."

"Who would strike a man when he is down? And don't you be calling him a man from what you told me yourself!"

"He is a bad man, but it doesn't serve us to kill him at present."

While they were thus speaking, Moll Pitcher and her friend were dragging the Tory into the wood, the spy having secured his weapon.

When Gideon Grimes recovered his senses again he found himself tied to a tree and with a gag in his mouth.

Not a living being appeared near him, and he was so tightly bound that he could scarcely turn his head around, while it was impossible for him to utter a word.

"Snakes alive!" he said to himself, "this must be Randy Marvin's work. He must have tackled me while I was fooling with that old nigger. But where in thunder can he have gone to, and what can be his game?"

The stout Tory captain trembled a good deal, as he knew that if in the power of his brother-in-law he could not expect any mercy.

About that same time the pretended old negro strolled carelessly into the Tory camp, which was situated on the outskirts of the regular encampment.

It was still quite early in the night, and only those who were weary after the journey had retired to rest.

Phil Pitcher was reclining in one of the wagons, surrounded by four of his Tory guards, and his legs were tied together with strong cord, one end of which was held by a rough-looking Tory.

Edith Grimes was standing at the side of the wagon giving the young prisoner a drink of water as she said to him:

"I spoke to father, and he says he will be easier on you if you give me your word of honor not to try to escape again."

"I won't do anything of the kind," answered the young prisoner in loud tones.

"What in thunder are you doing around here, old nigger?" cried one of the guards as the disguised spy approached the wagon.

"I'se doing nuffin', massa," answered Randy Marvin.

Phil Pitcher started on hearing the voice as he recognized the tones on the instant, and he stared at the old darky while drinking the water as he said to himself:

"I knew Randy wouldn't forget me, and I'll bet mother ain't far off either."

The old negro moved around the camp, staring at the Tories in their wagons as if he had never seen a camp of the kind before, while he muttered aloud:

"Sakes alibe, ef dem ain't rippin' hosses an' no mistakes!"

"Clear out of here, you old nigger!" cried one of the Tories as he flung the spy aside in a very rude manner.

"Sartin, massa, I'se a-gowan this berry minute, only I'se got some good rum."

"Then let us taste it."

The old darky drew a black bottle from his pocket and handed it to the Tory.

The man raised the bottle to his lips and drank the contents, when a loud voice fell on their ears, crying:

"Where's the captain, at all, as I want to see him to 'list for a soger?"

When Phil Pitcher heard that voice his heart bounded to his mouth and he mentally exclaimed:

"Dear mother! And how could she be so foolish as to risk so much for me!"

One of the Tories addressed the rough Irishman in saucy tones, crying:

"And so you want to be a soldier, Paddy?"

"To be sure I does, and maybe I could handle a gun with the best of you."

The entrance of the Irishman withdrew attention from the old negro, who was handing the bottle around to the other Tories guarding the wagon.

Edith Grimes still stood near the young prisoner, handing him a piece of bread as she quietly remarked:

"That man's voice sounds like your mother's, but I suppose I think so on account of the brogue."

Phil could only use one hand, and he grasped the girl's with it as he whispered to her:

"It is my mother. If you are my friend, now, give them a hand when they set to work."

"And who is the black fellow?"

"That is your Uncle Randy."

"Gracious me!" exclaimed the young girl, in suppressed tones, as she stared at the old negro, "to think that he should come here in that shape, and father around!"

"Where is your father?"

"He went out of camp a while ago, and that saucy girl went after him. I am glad she is not here or she'd know my Uncle Randy's voice, for she is just as sharp as the edge of an axe."

Two of the Tories were quizzing the Irishman, and the black bottle was still passing around among the others, when Gideon Grimes sprang suddenly in among them and seized a gun from the hands of one of the guards, to present it at the disguised spy as he roared out:

"Hands up, you tarnal rebel, as I've got you dead to rights now!"

"What am de matter, massa?" inquired the old negro, in apparent astonishment, as he glared at the rough Tory, drawing back a step or two.

"Now is the time to cut the cords on my legs!" whispered Phil Pitcher to the young girl.

"Yes, yes, I'll do it; but I am afraid father will shoot Uncle Randy."

While thus speaking, and while the attention of the guards were directed to the pretended old nigger and their captain, the patriotic girl cut the cord that secured the young fellow's legs.

Phil slipped out of the wagon on the instant that the Tory captain was addressing the spy and crying:

"I have got you fast now, you skunk! Fellers, that old nigger is Randy Marvin. Grab him while I keep the gun at him, and he is a dead coon if he offers to raise a hand!"

The spy did not offer to raise a hand in his own behalf, but some one else did.

Moll Pitcher had an eye on her boy in the wagon, and on the daring spy as well.

She saw the dear young fellow rising to his feet and slipping out on the ground, and she saw him moving around to her side.

She then sprang at the Tory leader and struck the weapon

with her stick, dealing him another blow on the head as quick as lightning, as she cried:

"Now for it, my brave boys!"

CHAPTER VII.

A RUCTION IN THE CAMP.

Two of the Tories were about to spring on the disguised spy when Moll Pitcher used her heavy stick with such good effect.

The gun in the hand of the Tory leader exploded, the ball flying up in the air and the discharged weapon was in the grasp of the spy, who sprang forward to seize it on the instant.

Moll Pitcher turned to her boy like a flash and handed him the sword which had been taken from Gideon Grimes in the wood, as she said to him:

"Lay about you like blazes now, my boy, and then cut for it with us!"

The spy was already laying about him with good effect, as he stretched two of the Tory guards on the ground in a lively manner.

The four guards around the wagon were already stupefied by the drugged liquor given them by the spy, and they were easily knocked over by Moll Pitcher and her boy.

The other Tories lying around sprang to their feet, however, on hearing the discharge of the gun, and they hastened to seize their weapons, one of them yelling:

"The rebels are on us!"

The rebels were on them, but not in great force, as only Moll Pitcher and her two friends dashed at them to fight their way out of the camp, the former crying:

"Here's a fine ruction for you, and bad luck to the villain who stands before us!"

At that moment Sally Friend sprang on the scene, crying: "Snakes alive, what's all this row about?"

The three patriots had then reached the edge of the camp, knocking down all who opposed them, while Moll Pitcher kept crying:

"Clear the way for the patriot boys, and down with the villains of Tories!"

Gideon Grimes sprang to his feet just as Sally reached his side, and he stared around in a dazed manner for a moment.

The girl grabbed him by the arm and shook him roughly, as she inquired:

"What in thunder is the matter, Gid?"

"Matter enough! Give me a weapon. Rally there, you fellows, and after those skunks!"

The Tory leader seized a gun lying near and dashed after Moll and her friends.

The brave woman, her boy and the spy were then dashing out of the small wood where the camp had been formed, and some of the Tories were running after them, uttering yells of alarm.

The soldiers in the English camp close by responded to the cries, and Captain Darling ran toward the scene, as he yelled aloud:

"What's the trouble here, Grimes?"

The Tory leader was then running along after his followers, and he yelled back:

"The young prisoner has escaped! This way, captain, if you want to take him again. Call out your mounted men and the rebels cannot get away from us."

Captain Darling yelled out for his troopers as loudly as he could, and some of them on foot were already hastening from their camp after him.

He then turned and gave orders to mount the troop at once, and continued crying:

"Bring out my horse, and follow us in the chase as you hear the cries!"

All the Tories in their camp who had not been disabled were then out in chase of the fugitives, with their leader, all yelling like so many hounds after a fox.

Sally Friend darted on close beside Gideon Grimes as she said to him:

"Wasn't that Randy Marvin's voice I heard in the row?"

"Yes, yes, the fiend fire him! But he must not escape from us now, nohow!"

"And is the young prisoner with him?"

"Yes, blame them! And that tarnal Irishman is in the crowd."

"Is there only three of them in all?"

"That's all I see so far."

"Then how in the world did they get the best of your whole crowd that way?"

"Don't ask me any foolish questions now, but keep on with me. Have you any pistols?"

"Yes, I have two here."

"Then give me one and hearken to what I have to say to you."

"What is it, Gid?"

"When we strike on these villains I'll tackle the Irishman and lay him out, and you fix Randy Marvin, who is rigged up as an old nigger."

Snakes alive. I saw the old nigger going into the camp a while ago."

"That's him."

"What about the young feller, Gid, if we should strike on them soon?"

"Don't hurt a hair of his head, as he will be worth a fortune to us soon, you can bet. The fellers ahead must have lost the track now, as they ain't yelling any more, but we'll soon strike on it again."

The Tories ahead had lost the track, or rather a view of the fugitives at the time.

On leaving the Tory camp Randy Marvin led his friends straight toward the wood where they had secured Gideon Grimes to a tree.

On entering that wood they wheeled to the left and ran along close together, the daring spy saying to Phil Pitcher:

"If you can keep on at this rate, young fellow, we'll soon get to the horses and then we'll laugh at the blame fools behind us."

"Where are the horses, good Randy?"

"At a friend's of mine about two miles along up here."

"Are they good ones?"

"The best you can find."

"I'll wager my life on that, my boy," said Moll Pitcher, as she clapped Phil on the back.

"You are awful brave, mother."

"Who in the mischief wouldn't be brave when fighting for such a boy as you are? And how is your arm, at all?"

"A little sore, but it will be all right in a week or so."

"And then you must have a crack at that villain, Captain Darling."

Phil drew up a little to gain breath, as he was weak from his wounds and from his close confinement while in the Tory wagon.

The kind woman noticed it, and she seized his right arm to support him, as she said:

"My poor boy, you are not strong at all; but cheer up and we'll soon be to the horses."

Phil drew a long breath, while the spy said to him:

"Don't talk too much, and take it a little easy, now, as I don't hear them after us."

"Then let us walk a little," said Moll Pitcher, "as my poor boy here is near beat out."

"Not at all, mother; and I want to ask you a question or two."

"Why not wait until we are all safe, my boy?"

"That's just what I want to be prepared for."

"Then here's two pistols for you, and they'll help you against the villains."

Phil took the pistols from his mother, and then inquired, in serious tones:

"Did you ever know this Captain Darling, mother?"

The woman hesitated to reply, thinking of the pledge she had made in former years.

The young fellow noticed the hesitation and turned to look at the woman as he inquired:

"Why don't you answer me, mother, as I have reasons for asking the question?"

"What are your reasons, at all?"

"This English captain pretends to be a great friend of mine, and he has offered me big inducements to go to England with him when the war is over."

The villain of the world! And what did you say to him, at all?"

"I told him to go to thunder, as he also wanted me to fight on the English side."

"That's right, my brave boy. Stick to your colors always, and one thing more."

"What is that?"

"If it should ever happen that you meet the villain again, treat him as you would a snake."

"I took a great dislike to him from the first, and I was wondering why he appeared to take such a liking to me."

"Hurry up your cakes," again said the spy, "as I hear the villains after us, and they have horses with them this time."

The Tories and their allies had got on the track of the fugitives, as Gideon Grimes was an old Indian fighter, and he could track human footsteps through the forest by day or night.

The fugitives ran on as fast as possible, but it was soon evident that Phil Pitcher was becoming exhausted.

The brave woman at his side supported him as well as she could, and so did the hardy spy, but yet their pursuers gained on them rapidly.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed Moll Pitcher as she heard the yells growing louder and nearer, "it is a murdering pity that we didn't bring the horses to the wood here for the poor boy."

"It is a pity we haven't a troop of our boys with us," responded Phil Pitcher, "and then we'd give the rascals more than they want."

"Captain Hardy is not more than ten miles back," said the spy, "and he would have been along with us, but General Washington gave orders not to push beyond New Brunswick."

Phil staggered at the moment, pressing his right hand to his heart as he gasped forth:

"I am used up, mother!"

"Try a drop of this liquor, then," said the anxious woman as she put a flask to the young fellow's mouth.

Phil sipped some of the liquor and then said:

"I feel better now, and let us on."

The spy felt the boy's pulse, helping him on the while, and he kept listening to the yells behind them.

"This won't work," said Randy Marvin, in decided tones, "and we must try another game."

"Then we'll stand and fight them," said Moll Pitcher, flourishing her stick and drawing a pistol.

"That can't be done, Moll. Help the boy up this tree and we'll fool them yet."

"That's the ticket!" said Phil, as they pushed him up a large tree until he reached one of the lower branches.

The cries were growing nearer and nearer, at the moment, and the woman was becoming more excited.

Phil reached down his hand to her and pressed hers as he said:

"Away with you two now and save yourselves, and I will be safe up here."

"Come along, Moll," said the spy, "as it is our only play if we would save your boy hereafter."

Being thus appealed to Moll Pitcher hastened on with the spy, as she groaned forth:

"I'll kill every Englishman I'll meet for a year and a day if anything happens my dear boy."

Phil Pitcher dragged himself higher up in the tree with his sound arm, as he said to himself:

"Did any boy ever have a braver mother in his life, and how good Randy Marvin is! Ah, here come the infernal Tories now, with Gideon Grimes and that ugly-looking girl ahead of them."

Gideon Grimes and Sally Friend were soon running along under the tree with the howling Tories after them.

Out on the road running parallel with the path in the wood rode Captain Darling and fifty of his troopers, keeping the track of the fugitives by the cries that resounded through the forest.

On before them and making for a friendly farmhouse, dashed the spy and Moll Pitcher, the former saying to the never-tiring woman:

"We'll get the best of them now, Moll, if we only have time to mount and away."

"But sure you don't mean to ride away from my boy and leave him up that tree?"

"Not much. We'll scoot around with a spare horse and fool the villains behind us."

"If you do that and bring him off safe, I'll make you drunk for a week after we get back from the camp."

"Thank you, Moll, but I hope I'll not be idle for a week, as I want to do good work for General Washington in New York before that time."

They had just gained the edge of the wood, where they would be compelled to break out in an open field in order to gain the friendly farmhouse.

Gideon Grimes and his party were close behind him at the time, the Tory leader suspecting where the spy was making for from the fact that he was also acquainted with the farmer toward whose house the fugitives were flying.

Moll and her friend dashed across the field at full speed, the former saying:

"We'll beat them in the chase, anyway, as I could always run like a deer."

"There are the horsemen out on the road!" said the spy, "and keep under the shelter of the fence here."

Gideon Grimes and Sally reached the edge of the wood at the moment, and the Tory yelled aloud:

"There's only two of them there now, and the other must be broken down back in the wood. Back with you fellows and look for him, while I set Captain Darling and his troopers after the skunk of a spy and the other!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PHIL SPIES A FRIEND.

The wounded youth watched the Tories running by him with the most intense interest.

He could also hear the tramp of the troopers on the road, and he could almost count their numbers from the sound through his experience in the cavalry service.

He noticed Sally Friend running along with the Tory leader, but he could not recognize the girl in the dim light as he said to himself:

"Can it be that Edith Grimes is after me also, and she pretending to be such a friend?"

While thus muttering he noticed another female form under the very tree on which he was resting, and then a faint voice fell on his ear, saying:

"Oh, dear me, how tired I am; and I do so want to see if he has escaped!"

Phil recognized the voice at once.

The girl was resting against the tree and panting for breath, while thus exclaiming, and Phil then knew that he had to deal with a friend.

Lowering himself from the branches he cast his own voice down, as he said:

"I am up here, Edith!"

The young girl started on hearing the voice above her, and then looked up to perceive the youth descending, while she said to him, in joyous tones:

"Oh, I'm so glad they didn't catch you. But hadn't you better stay up there for the present?"

"No; as I want to be on the move again now that I have recovered."

The young fellow had lowered himself to the ground, and he was then standing beside the girl, who said to him:

"But they may return this way, and others may come along after them."

"Then let us move away here to the right, if you don't mind."

"I don't mind at all if you can only get away from father and his crowd in safety."

"You can bet I can!"

They were then pushing through the wood to the right.

They were both silent for a time, as they were listening to the yells and cries of those who were then in full chase after the other fugitives.

They had not proceeded far when the young girl placed her hand on Phil's arm, saying:

"Do you know what I am thinking about?"

"I can't say."

"What do you say if we make our way back toward the camp?"

"What for?"

"Then I will try to steal out two of the horses, and we can ride back toward home on the main road, if you are strong enough."

"It is a splendid idea, my dear girl; but won't your father be down on you for it?"

"I don't care for that as I want to go back to my sick mother, and I don't want to go to New York with father."

"Then let us turn back through this path, only I am troubled about my mother and your uncle."

"They'll get away, and we'll find them on the road back."

The two young friends then hastened back to the path as fast as they could.

On gaining the edge of the wood, looking toward the Tory camp, Edith left her companion, saying:

"You can bet I'll bring two good horses out this way, and then we'll be off on the main road!"

"I'll bless you if you do!" answered Phil, in very earnest tones.

Only three men were left in the Tory camp when Edith reached there, and two of them were still under the influence of the drug, while the other was badly wounded.

Edith hastened to saddle two of the best horses, one of them being her father's own favorite charger.

While she was thus engaged, one of the stupid fellows arose from the ground and staggered toward her, as he inquired:

"What's been the row here, gal?"

"The row has been that the prisoner has escaped and father and the others are away after him now on foot."

"What are you going to do with them horses?"

"I am going to take father's horse to him, back the road there, and I want one for myself."

"Did he send you back for them?"

"What a question to ask, Tom Nash! Do you suppose I'd take them if he didn't?"

"All right, then."

Edith had no trouble in leaving the camp with the horses.

Mounting one of them, having fixed the stirrup so as to ride side-saddle fashion, she rode her own father's good horse straight across to the spot where Phil awaited her.

The eager young fellow was on the alert, and he sprang on the saddle with the greatest ease, although his left arm pained very much.

Before leaving the Tory camp Edith slipped two pistols in her pocket, and she secured a sword also.

When she presented the weapons to Phil, she said to him:

"I hope you may not have to use them against father, but don't spare any of the others."

"Thank you, my girl. Keep one of the pistols, as you may want to use it, and my mother gave me one. I'll keep the sword and use it, you can bet, if it is necessary."

They dashed along the main road, side by side, and they were soon out on a line with the edge of the wood where Moll Pitcher and the spy made a run for the friendly farmhouse.

The side road was about a mile and a half away at that point, and they could not see anything of the troopers or the Tories.

While riding along they kept their eyes well ahead of them, and to the right and to the left also, and they soon espied the friendly farmhouse.

At that moment loud yells were borne to their ears, and the young man said:

"They must have struck on the trail of mother and Randy Marvin."

"Here comes some one riding along here now," responded the girl, "and there are two of them."

"Draw aside here into the wood, then," said Phil, as he faced his horse into the shelter.

The two horses sprang into the wood, and their riders halted them to peep out along the road at the oncoming riders, who were galloping at a furious rate.

"They are pursued," said Phil, "and I'll bet my life it is mother and Randy!"

"We'll soon see," answered the girl. "Now I can see a lot of horsemen scooting along after them."

Phil pushed his horse near to the edge of the wood to watch the chase, and the girl drew out with him, saying:

"Don't go out if you can help it."

"Certainly not."

The fugitives were soon near the edge of the wood, and one of them sang out at the moment:

"Into the wood for it and we will find the boy mighty quick!"

Phil recognized the speaker at once, as it was Randy Marvin, who was leading a spare horse in the chase.

The other was Moll Pitcher, who insisted on returning at once in search of her boy.

A cry of joy burst from Phil as he urged his horse out on the road, crying:

"Here I am, mother, and the good girl with me who stood my friend."

"Ride on—ride on, then!" cried Randy as the two young people dashed out on the road beside them.

All four dashed back to the road, the spy still leading the spare horse.

"Who are those after us, Randy?" cried Phil, as he looked back.

"Some of the British troopers who darted out on us above there as we were returning this road."

"How are you mounted, my boy?" inquired Moll Pitcher.

"First-rate, mother."

"And the girl?"

"She has got a good horse under her also."

"Then we'll swerve to the left here!" cried the spy, "and steer back again, as we are gaining on the troopers like fury, now!"

"Halt, out there!" rang out a sharp voice as Gideon Grimes and seven or eight of his men sprang out on the road in front of the riders.

"Blaze away at the villains, and on with you!" cried Moll Pitcher.

The spy's pistol was out before Moll spoke, and one of the Tories fell before him.

Phil fired a moment after, and another dropped on the ground.

While thus firing the horses were not pulled up, but urged on the faster, and right down on the Tory band swept the four riders.

A yell of rage burst from Gideon Grimes as he was flung aside on the road with another blow from Moll Pitcher's stick, and he cried:

"Fire at them! No, no; that's my gal they are whipping away with them, and don't shoot her! Darn your eyes, why did you fire so soon? Good, good, you hit the right horse, and the youngster is down again!"

Phil Pitcher was in bad luck that night, as the horse he was riding had been hit by the only ball the Tories had fired at him.

With a yell of rage Moll pulled up and she wheeled around, saying:

"The spare horse, you villain, and up with the brave boy again!"

Randy Marvin had already turned with the spare horse and Edith was pulled up also.

Phil sprang to the ground as the horse staggered and fell under him, and he ran to meet his friends, crying:

"Better luck next time, mother!"

The Tories dashed along the road toward their leader, crying:

"Don't fire, or you'll hit my gal or the young fellow! But one of you pick off that black devil, and another try for the Irish fellow."

"It's dangerous, cap," answered one of the men, "as they are all mixed up together just now."

"That's so; and here come the troopers!"

Captain Darling and his troopers dashed along at the moment and Gideon Grimes yelled to the officer:

"That's my daughter and the young prisoner ahead, there, Captain Darling, and spur like thunder and you'll grab the others, too!"

Phil Pitcher had just sprang on the spare horse, and away darted the four friends again, while Gideon Grimes cried out:

"Edith, Edith, pull up, there, and don't let them take you off that way!"

While thus speaking the Tory leader dashed on after the troopers until he reached the spot where the horse had fallen, and he stood to look at the animal as he yelled out:

"Thunder and fury, if this isn't my own black stallion that's shot! How in the mischief did the young skunk get him out of the camp?"

Sally Friend sprang out from the woods at the moment and looked after the chase as she answered:

"That gal of yours took the horses to help the young rebel, and she is riding away with them of her own free will."

"If I thought so I'd kill the gal!"

"It is the truth, as sure as you are a born man; and I suspected as much this evening!"

"Then why didn't you say so, confound you?"

"I hadn't time, Gid. Don't get so riled and I'll fool them yet."

"How will you do it, then?"

"Just wait and you will see."

"Wait and be hanged! Thunderation! everything is going against me to-night!"

CHAPTER IX.

"LUCK IS AGAINST ME."

While flying from their pursuers the fugitives had to ride straight toward the English camp for a time.

Randy Marvin was well acquainted with the neighborhood, however, and he soon led them into a side path, as he cried to Phil:

"Ride single file, now, and press on as fast as the horse will bear you!"

"All right, Randy!"

The path thus taken by the fugitives was a very narrow lane, through which only one horseman could ride at a time.

Phil insisted on his mother and Edith going before him, and he soon turned in the path as he said to himself:

"This would be a good place to hold against the troopers, if we had to do it."

The troopers were soon thundering along the path after them, Captain Darling leading the way.

The young English officer was mounted on a splendid horse, and he did not spare him.

The troopers behind could not make as fast time on their heavy steeds, and the impatient officer turned to cry back to them:

"Spur on—spur on, you lazy rascals, and I'll give ten pounds for every prisoner taken!"

The young plotter would not have his late prisoner killed for the world, and he had warned his men not to fire on the fugitive.

He urged them on to capture them by threats and promises, and he rode ahead of them some distance, hoping that something might happen to place Phil Pitcher in his power again.

As for the others, he did not care a straw, except that he had a desire to punish the daring friends who had risked so much in rescuing the prisoner.

The fugitives made splendid time through the lane, yet Captain Darling kept close on after them, while his troopers soon lagged behind.

The dashing officer was almost tempted to spur ahead and risk an encounter with his three enemies, but brave as he was he feared the result.

The narrow road led out into an open field where the four riders could ride abreast again.

The spy then turned to the young girl and inquired:

"What horse is that you have got under you, Edith?"

"Father's brown filly."

"Can he jump well?"

"First class."

"Then we'll take across the country for it, as I know that you can keep on the saddle."

"You will see that I can."

"Why did you leave your mother, Edith?"

"My father forced me to go with him, sir."

"Will you go back to mother now?"

"That's where I am going, Uncle Randy."

"All right, then. Here's for our first fence, and how are you on a jump, Mrs. Pitcher?"

"Bad cess to your impudence!" cried Moll as she cleared the fence in splendid style, "did you ever see an Irish woman yet that couldn't ride a horse over anything at all?"

They all cleared the fence in fine style, and Captain Darling and his troopers were not far behind them.

Randy Marvin then led the way back to the American lines, saying:

"If we are not headed off we will laugh at them now, you can bet."

A cry of alarm burst from Edith at the moment, and she pointed to a party running across the fields ahead of them as she gasped forth:

"That's father and his band coming to cut us off!"

The spy cast one glance ahead, and then turned his eye in the other direction as he remarked:

"The troopers are coming after us, and we'll have to turn up the mountain here. It is pretty steep, but I guess our horses can make it."

"Of course they can!" cried Moll Pitcher, as they faced up toward the steep mountain, thus turning away from those who attempted to head them off.

Randy Marvin cast his eyes ahead in the hope of proceeding up some path leading up the mountain, but he failed to do so, and cried:

"We'll face up, and look out for your horses. Keep together now!"

"Together we are!" cried Moll Pitcher, "and the Old Boy take the hindmost!"

The Tories and the troopers soon came together in the pursuit, and they all dashed toward the mountain, Gideon Grimes crying:

"We have got them now, as they can't get up there on horseback, nohow!"

The prediction appeared to be verified on the instant, as one of the horses ascending the mountain lost his footing and rolled back, bearing his rider with him.

That rider was unlucky Phil Pitcher, who could not guide the animal up the mountain in proper manner with his one hand.

The unfortunate youth was as weak as a child also, and he had scarcely strength enough to disengage himself from the stumbling animal as he felt him giving away.

He did spring to one side, however, still holding on to the bridle, and he was soon dragged back with the rolling horse, although he did not receive any fresh injuries through the accident.

While Phil was thus falling down the mountain, he yelled out:

"Luck is against me. Ride on, dear mother, I implore you, and you can rescue me again."

Moll was about to turn her horse down the mountain, when the spy seized the bridle rein and urged the animal forward, as he cried:

"Don't be a fool, Moll! And what good will it do you to be taken prisoner with them?"

"That's true, that's true; but oh, to think that my brave boy has such bad luck all along!"

A deep groan burst from Edith as she saw the young man rolling down, but her uncle cheered her as he cried to her:

"Push on, push on, Edith! As I tell you your father will be down on you after to-night."

The girl cast one glance back and she saw them seizing the young man, while she cried:

"There's Sally Friend down there with them, and I believe she is a bad lot!"

"She is that!" responded her uncle. "Keep on, keep on, as they are still after us on foot!"

Having secured the young prisoner, Gideon Grimes and his men hastened up the mountain after the fugitives, the leader crying:

"We'll have the rebels yet, and I'll roast Randy Marvin to-night!"

CHAPTER X.

MOLL STICKS TO HER BOY.

Phil Pitcher was in bad luck, but his friends had no idea of deserting him.

The lad was secured by the troopers without any trouble, as it would be folly for him to attempt resistance with one arm, weak as he was.

The horse was not injured much by riding down the mountain, and Phil was placed upon the animal's back again, Captain Darling saying:

"Treat the youth with the greatest kindness, and lead him back to camp."

In the meantime, Moll Pitcher and her two friends were flying up the mountain pursued by Gideon Grimes and half a dozen of his men.

Edith Grimes was the last in the flight, but her uncle kept close to her, urging on the horse.

Moll Pitcher rode ahead, casting wistful glances back toward where her son was held as a prisoner, while she kept muttering:

"Come what will, my boy, I'll not desert you, you may be sure."

The pursuers did not fire on the fugitives, as Gideon Grimes feared to shoot his daughter, who could be very useful to him hereafter.

The spy-scout cast several glances back, and he did not fail to use his pistols when he saw the Tories gaining ground on him, and two of the rascals fell under his fire.

Moll Pitcher reserved her weapons for close work, as she hoped that they would aid her in finally rescuing the dear youth who was a prisoner.

The Tory leader was in a fearful rage at the flight of his daughter and the loss of his best horse, while he was burning to have revenge on his brother-in-law also.

The chase was an exciting one from the very start, and it appeared as if it would continue so, although the troopers did not take further part after capturing the helpless youth.

The horses did not make good time at first, as it was difficult work getting up the steep mountain side.

The active Tories on foot were old hunters, and they plunged up with great spirit until they were checked by the spy's bullets.

After climbing about three hundred yards, however, the animals struck better ground, and away they went at full gallop, leaving their pursuers behind in short order.

Gideon Grimes still fancied that his daughter was an unwilling prisoner, and he yelled out:

"Pull up, Edith, and don't go with that skunk any further."

The girl did not reply, but Randy Marvin yelled back:

"Your gal is going back to her sick mother; and I'm going to follow you up until I settle with you."

"Come back and try it on now."

"Not till I see her safe at home first, and then I'll be after you."

The Tory leader howled with rage when he saw his deadly foe slipping away from him, and he yelled to his men:

"Fire at the rebel, but be careful not to hit my gal."

The Tories sent a volley after the fugitives, but not a shot took effect.

Then Moll Pitcher cried out:

"Ye mean dogs, don't ye suppose but that I'll soon be back after my boy again, and then we'll play the mischief with ye."

And Moll meant every word of it.

Soon after that the Tories gave up the hunt in disgust, their leader saying:

"I'll have it out with that skunk before long if I have to follow him into the rebel camp."

Sally Friend had kept in the background after guiding the others across the fields in the hope of intercepting the fugitives.

The cunning girl remained at the foot of the mountain with Captain Darling until the return of the Tory leader.

Drawing him aside, she said to him:

"Don't you now believe that your gal ran away with them?"

"It looks like it, but darn my eyes if I know what to make of it."

"I know what to make of it. She's dead gone on the young prisoner there, and you can bet your fortune she'll be back to help him."

"Then why didn't she come back when I called on her?"

"Because her uncle wouldn't let her just then, I calculate; but you'll see her back in camp soon or I'm a fool."

Captain Darling had been ruminating over the recapture, and he then addressed the Tory leader in sharp tones, saying:

"I can't understand, Captain Grimes, how your prisoner escaped from you."

Gideon Grimes was in very bad humor, and he responded in gruff tones:

"Then you'd better see to the young rebel yourself hereafter, Captain Darling, as he may escape from me again through his smart friends."

The proposition did not suit the English officer for several reasons.

With the prisoner in the hands of the regular soldiers it would not be so easy for the plotter to carry out his designs against him.

Phil Pitcher was only a private soldier in the American army, and as such he was liable to be placed in a common prison in New York or on board of one of the old hulks in the harbor, where so many patriots were starved or abused to death in those days.

It was, therefore, desirable that the young fellow should be kept in the hands of the Tories, so that Captain Darling could have him at his disposal whenever he pleased.

The officer then spoke to the Tory leader in milder tones, saying:

"I wish you to take charge of the prisoner again, Captain Grimes, as I have an object, as you know, in keeping him under my care."

The words were spoken in low tones, and Gideon Grimes responded in a similar manner, saying:

"I understand, sir, and I swear to you that he will not get away from me in a hurry; but I want to say something right here."

"What is that?"

"We should make tracks for New York right off, as you can bet his friends will try to get him off again very soon."

Captain Darling reflected a few moments, and then responded:

"I must move with my troop, but you can push on with your men as soon as possible."

"Then I'll do it, as I don't care to hang around here much."

The Tory rascal then drew Sally aside again, and said to her:

"See here, old gal!"

"What is it, Gid?"

"Are you game enough to start right back at once and finish the job we talked about?"

"Why not, if you like it?"

"I do want you to do it; and it will be all the better for

both of us if you can put Randy Marvin out of the way at the same time, as it will be dangerous if he suspects us."

"I'll try it on, Gid; but you know he is a very tough customer."

"I know it; and you are just the girl to get him down low. Go for him, and then we can live in New York in peace after the war is over, which can't last long now, as the rebels are on their last legs."

"I hope so; but it don't look much like it to see the English scooting away now."

"That's a dodge to draw them on, and they'll catch it nicely if they follow us on to New York."

Sally did not respond on this subject; but they soon settled about their trip back.

Mrs. Grimes must be put out of the way, and her brother as well.

They all hastened back to the Tory camp, and the young prisoner was given in charge of Gideon Grimes again, Captain Darling saying:

"Get him to New York as quick as you can, and take him to the house out in the suburbs that I will direct you to. Then he will be fully in my power, and your fortune is made."

Sally Friend got a fresh horse and started back on her murderous mission as fast as possible, as she said to her instructor:

"If I catch Edith I will watch her well, and you'll see that she will soon come back after that young fellow there."

Gideon Grimes had been reflecting about his daughter and her liking for the young prisoner, and he was meditating on a project of using the young folks for his own advantage, and for betraying Captain Darling at the same time.

He then answered, saying:

"Do get her back to me, as I may work a point for ourselves with her."

The cunning girl read the rascal's mind, and a wicked smile appeared on her ugly face, as she said to herself:

"Now, Gid Grimes, if you attempt to fool me I'll make you suffer. I'll do your work, but you must let me share your spoils thereafter, or I'll turn Captain Darling against you, and he's not to be fooled with, I can see."

While the Tory leader was thus plotting with the wicked girl, Moll Pitcher and her two allies had gained a point about five miles back from the English camp, and they were then discussing as to the best means of rescuing the unlucky young prisoner.

Randy Marvin advised that they should hasten to the American camp, and return again toward New York in a day or so for that purpose.

Moll Pitcher insisted on going at once to the house of their friend in the neighborhood, saying:

"I'm going to stick to my boy, whatever you may do. I can change my appearance again, and try my luck in the Tory camp once more."

They were discussing on a side road, when an old man sprang out on them from a wood and addressed the spy in very familiar tones, saying:

"Randy, you are the very man I wanted to meet just now."

The spy-scout stared at the old stranger for a moment or so, and then exclaimed:

"Dang my eyes, and is it possible that you are Captain Hardy in that rig?"

The disguised officer grasped the spy's hand and drew him aside, as he whispered:

"Yes, old fellow, and I am trying it on in your way. I am bound for New York on an important mission for the general, and I want you to come with me if possible."

CHAPTER XI.

ALL BOUND FOR NEW YORK.

About daylight on the following morning the Tory captain and his men moved on through the English camp, taking the main road toward the city of New York.

Phil Pitcher was sleeping when the wagon started on the journey.

The young patriot's legs were bound as before, and his right arm was secured as well, while five of the Tories rode on around him.

Sally Friend rode in the wagon with the prisoner also.

While this wicked girl was riding out of camp on the previous night to carry out her evil mission a Tory from their old neighborhood galloped toward her, and the man gave positive information that Mrs. Grimes was dead.

Sally then rode back to Gideon Grimes and told him the news, saying:

"There is no use in my going home now, and Edith is sure to come after us soon."

"But that skunk, Randy Marvin, will be certain to be on my track now, as he has sworn to take my life when his sister died."

"That's all the more reason that I should be along with you."

"I guess you're right, so come along. Just put him out of the way, and I'll make you Mrs. Grimes when we get to New York."

"You can bet I will, if I can get a chance, and he is bound to give it to me, as he will be after the young prisoner as well as yourself."

It was then decided that Sally should watch over the young prisoner during the journey.

The Tory party traveled fast that day.

On after them, about four miles in the rear, rolled a covered farm wagon drawn by two horses, and which contained four persons.

Two of the persons in the farm wagon appeared to be a substantial old farmer and his aged wife; the third was a rough farm hand with a coarse crop of reddish hair and a beard of the same color; while the fourth had all the appearance of a green country boy paying his first visit to the city.

That pretended old man was Captain Hardy of the Virginia cavalry, who was risking death as a spy on a mission for Washington.

The old countrywoman was Moll Pitcher.

The rough farm hand was Randy Marvin, who had also heard of the death of his sister, and who was pursuing Gideon Grimes for a double purpose.

And the green boy was Edith Grimes, who had been easily prevailed on to follow her father and some one else.

The disguises and the wagon had been furnished by a patriot farmer living near the English camp, who had also informed his friends of the departure of the Tories early in the morning.

The English army moved on in the retreat very soon after.

The English held New York City at the time, and Washington knew that it would not be wise to attack the place while the powerful fleet of the enemy commanded the harbor.

The patriot general desired to strike the enemy at another point, and hence Captain Hardy was hastening through the English lines with secret despatches destined to reach the American general operating in the East.

While the English held the city, the Americans controlled the North River from West Point, and several sharp conflicts took place in Westchester County and on the other side of the river.

Westchester County swarmed with Tories at the time, but

the patriots often chased the rascals down as far as the Harlem River.

When Gideon Grimes was compelled to leave his native haunts, his eye was fixed on Westchester, as he said to himself:

"That's the spot for me to work in hereafter while the war lasts."

It also happened that Captain Darling had hired an old farm hand in Westchester, in order to carry out his plot against Moll Pitcher's boy.

Captain Hardy had received orders from General Washington to push on to the East with the despatches as soon as possible, and to then make his way back by striking across New York near West Point, where his company was to meet him.

That company was intended to operate against the English horse parties and the Tories in Westchester County, as marauding bands from that city of late had been playing the mischief with the patriot citizens along the North River.

Moll Pitcher was anxious to overtake the Tories and rescue her boy as soon as possible, but Captain Darling pushed on rapidly, and crossed over into New York City ahead of his enemies, little dreaming that they were so close behind him.

The Tory leader then pushed on up into Westchester, and took possession of the old farmhouse with his men.

Phil Pitcher was placed in a back room on the second story, which had been fitted up as a sort of prison bedroom, and Sally Friend still kept watch over him.

Four days went by in that prison retreat, and the young prisoner grew stronger each day, his wound improving at the same time.

Thinking of another escape, however, he was keen enough to pretend that he was very weak, and that he could not use his left arm at all.

The back windows of the farmhouse looked out on the North River, and Phil hoped to escape across to Jersey if he could only sever the iron bars in the room in which he was confined.

On the fifth day of their arrival in Westchester Captain Darling appeared with his troops, and the young officer at once sought an interview with the young prisoner.

The plotter then threw off the mask to a certain extent, as he said to Phil:

"The vile woman known now as Moll Pitcher is not your mother."

"I don't believe that," answered the youth in blunt tones, "as she is an honest, good woman, and she has been a kind mother to me."

"But I tell you that you were stolen from your home in Ireland when you were a little boy by that woman and her rascally husband. You are my cousin, and I came out here to rescue you, and to fight those infernal Yankees."

Phil could not quite understand the man, but he felt that he was playing some deep game of his own, and he answered:

"You are very kind, but I don't thank you, all the same. No matter who or what I am, I am an American at heart, and I will never fight against the Yankees, as you call them."

Captain Darling frowned fiercely at the answer, and then said:

"Then you will remain here as a prisoner until I am ready to go back, and you must go back with me, as I am your lawful guardian. If you attempt to escape again, you will be put to death as a rebel."

Phil laughed to himself at the threat, but he was cunning enough to say:

"It isn't likely that I can escape while I am in this state."

"Then get strong as soon as you can, as I may sail for Europe with you very soon."

The last threat did alarm the lad a little, as he hated the thought of leaving the country, never to see his mother and other friends again.

While meditating over his position that evening Phil heard a familiar voice outside on the road singing an old Irish song, and his heart beat with agitation as he said to himself:

"Here's mother after me again, and they'll put her to death if she is discovered."

The musical voice was hushed at the moment, and then out sang Gideon Grimes in fierce and exultant tones, crying:

"We've got you safe this time, and you'll soon die the death of a spy."

The lad was trembling for his mother, when a manly voice addressed the Tory leader, crying:

"You've got me, Gideon Grimes, but you can't keep me; and I'll bet my life that the rope is not made that will hang me."

The speaker was Randy Marvin, who had just been seized by the Tories.

The daring spy had tracked Gideon Grimes and his young prisoner to the farmhouse, and he was prowling around disguised as a farm hand when Sally Friend noticed him.

The smart man could deceive the men of the party, but the keen-witted girl was on the alert for strangers, and she soon detected the man who had sworn to slay Gideon Grimes.

On giving a hint to the man who had promised to marry her, the leader pounced on the spy with five or six of his men, and the daring man was soon overpowered.

Moll Pitcher was not far away at the time with Edith Grimes, who was still disguised as a boy.

The heroine of Brandywine was about to walk to the assistance of her friend, when the disguised girl held her back, crying:

"Remember your boy. If you are captured and put to death who will save him? Also remember that Captain Hardy is not so very far away with his men."

"True for ye, girl, and I must take it easy; but sure they may hang up your good, brave uncle at once."

"You hasten away to find Captain Hardy and his men, and I will go to father and beg of him to spare uncle for a time."

"You are a good girl, and a brave one. If you see my boy tell him that I am not forgetting him, and away I go for Captain Hardy."

"And I go to save my uncle."

Randy Marvin was standing under a tree in the farmyard at the moment, with a strong rope around his neck.

The brave spy's arms were bound behind his back, and two of the Tories held an end of the rope, while their leader cried:

"We'll make short work of you now, you rebel skunk."

The spy-scout glared back at his enemy, as he defiantly cried:

"I will live to see you strung up yet, Gideon Grimes, as I know that you are a robber and a murderer."

"String up the skunk and choke the lie in his throat."

The two willing hands were pulling on the end of the rope, and the spy was lifted from his feet, when a boyish form darted into the yard and sprang toward the Tory leader to tear the sword from his hand, crying:

"This is a shame, and I won't stand it."

Then up toward the rope the boyish figure sprang and severed it in two with one sweep of the weapon, crying:

"That would be murder, and I won't have it if you kill me!"

Gideon Grimes sprang at the boy and presented a pistol at his head, as he cried:

"You tarnal rebel, who are you that dares to interfere with me?"

The disguised girl faced her father with flashing eyes, as she cried:

"I am your own daughter, but I'm not a bit proud of you. That's right, uncle, go as quick as you can!"

The active spy had taken advantage of the diversion, as he had kicked aside the Tories who held him, and darted away toward the river, with his arms still bound behind him.

Gideon Grimes flung his daughter aside with a fierce imprecation, and sprang after his enemy, crying:

"After him, men, and some of you grab that infernal gal!"

CHAPTER XII.

MOLL HELPS A FRIEND.

Phil Pitcher witnessed the exciting scenes thus described, as he was peering out through the bars of his prison window.

A shout of exultation burst from the youth as he saw the brave spy dashing toward the river, and he exclaimed:

"That's a splendid girl, if she is a Tory's daughter, and I'll never forget her for saving Randy's life."

The Tory captain had his prisoner dragged to the rear of the farmhouse, as he feared interruption on the part of Captain Darling or some of his men.

The English officer was away with his troop at the time, but they were expected back at any moment, and Gideon Grimes feared that they might delay the execution to give the spy a trial.

Phil Pitcher watched the pursuit of the spy with breathless interest, but he did not forget the brave girl.

One of the Tories attempted to seize Edith, when Sally sprang out from the house and pushed the fellow aside, saying:

"Come into the house with me; and what makes you dress like a boy?"

Edith was prepared for the treacherous girl, and she answered:

"It was safer for me to travel here in this rig than in my own."

"Do you know that your mother is dead?"

"I do."

"Did you travel here with your uncle?"

"I did not."

Sally knew that the young girl was not telling the truth, but she did not pretend as much, and she continued her inquiries:

"Who did you come here with, then?"

"I came alone. Oh, I do hope that father will not kill uncle."

Several shots were heard in the direction of the river at that moment.

Edith made a movement toward breaking away from Sally, but the strong girl dragged her into the house saying:

"Your uncle must take his chances when he fights against and spies on your father, who is a good man and my husband."

"My father your husband, when mother is not cold in her grave?"

"What of that? You be civil to me, Edith, and I will be your true friend. Would you like to see the young prisoner now, while they are busy hunting your uncle?"

The disguised girl colored to the eyes, and she promptly answered:

"Yes, I would like to see the young man, as I have a message from his mother."

"Where is she?"

"Away in the American camp."

"I want to tell you that the woman who fought at Monmouth is not his mother, and that he will be a rich young

man when he comes of age. You stand to me, and I will help you win his love. Come and see him now."

"Not in these clothes."

"Yes, you must, as you have no time to change them now."

Phil Pitcher was still standing at the window, looking down toward the river, when the prison door was opened, and the disguised girl was pushed into the room by her pretended stepmother.

The young fellow started, and then hastened to clasp Edith's hand, as he whispered:

"Is dear mother safe?"

Edith hastened to tell about his mother, speaking in cautious tones, as they both feared that Sally was listening outside the strong door.

Phil shook his head on hearing of his mother's hastening away in search of Captain Hardy, and said:

"I know mother better. When she hears those shots she will move down to the river to help Randy. Oh, if I could only cut one of the bars on that window and get out!"

Edith drew a small file from her pocket, and put it into the young man's hand, as she remarked:

"Uncle Randy saw the bars on the window, and he guessed you were in here. Don't trust Sally Friend, but get to work as soon as you can. I see father has two of his men outside the door."

"Yes; but I will get out by the window now, and you must come with me."

Sally opened the door at that moment, as she slyly remarked:

"That's long enough for this time, young folks, and my old man may soon be back."

"Let me know about your Uncle Randy right off," pleaded Phil, as Edith left with Sally.

"I will if I can."

When the brave spy dashed down toward the river he had hopes of bursting the cords on his arms in his flight.

They were too strong, however, and he did not care to plunge into the water while thus encumbered.

The active man was as fleet as a race horse, yet those after him could run well also.

The spy did gain on his pursuers before reaching the bank of the river, and he then wheeled to the right, and dashed along the path, Gideon Grimes pretty close behind him, the latter yelling:

"Fire a volley after the rebel and bring him down at once."

The pursuers sent several pistol shots after the fugitive, but they did not appear to hit him, as he kept on at full speed. Moll Pitcher heard the shots and the cries as she was hastening along the road, and the brave woman turned toward the river on the instant, muttering aloud:

"That's Randy getting away from the villains, and I'll try to give him a helping hand."

The spy was still flying along when he saw Moll trying to intercept him, and he darted toward her, crying:

"Stranger, give me a hand and cut these cords if you don't want to see a man murdered."

Moll took the hint, and she darted at her friend, saying:

"What is the matter with your arms, poor man?"

Moll did cut the cords on the double quick, while Gideon Grimes yelled out:

"Stop that, ole woman, or you'll get yourself into trouble."

Moll darted along beside the spy, as she said to him:

"I suppose it is best for me to play shady with the rascals?"

"That's the game. Keep by me now, and we will soon give them the slip."

Moll Pitcher could run as fast as most men, and she was fresh at the time.

Gathering her skirts up a little, away she flew with her friend, yelling aloud:

"The robbers! The robbers! And who will save us from them?"

Captain Darling was riding back to the farmhouse with his troop when he heard the yells of the woman, and he faced his men toward the fugitives, saying:

"What's wrong here?"

"The robbers are after us!" yelled Moll, as she dashed through the troopers with her friend. "Kill the villains, good soldiers."

The troopers made way for the terrified pair, who darted into the wood beyond.

Then upon the scene rushed Gideon Grimes and his men, the former panting for breath, as he gasped forth:

"That's the tarnal spy, Randy Marvin, captain, and I think it is Moll Pitcher with him."

"Then pursue them, men!" yelled the officer. "And fifty pounds to the man who captures Moll Pitcher!"

CHAPTER XIII.

HE WORKS FOR HIS MOTHER.

Phil Pitcher was terribly troubled about his mother, as he felt that the devoted woman would run into any danger on his account, or to assist a true friend.

Edith had scarcely left the prison room when the young fellow set to work on one of the iron bars of the window as he said to himself:

"That's a dear, good girl, but I am more worried about mother now. Here's to work for freedom before the rascals return!"

Phil did work with a good heart, and with hands that were almost as useful as ever.

"It was growing quite dark, and the small file cut into the iron bar without making much noise, while the young prisoner kept singing aloud the while.

Those on guard outside the room noticed the singing, and one of the Tories said to the other:

"The captain's gal cheered up the young rebel, but her father will give her fits, if I don't mistake, as she is in with the enemy."

"There's no accounting for what gals do," answered the other; "and I don't trust the captain's new wife, either."

"But is she his wife?"

"She says she is, but I ain't heard him own up yet."

"And you won't, either, as the captain is not such a fool as to marry that ugly thing."

The guards kept on discussing about Sally, and Phil worked like a beaver.

The bar was nearly severed when he heard the tramping of horses in the front yard, and then a loud voice fell on his ear, crying:

"Ye murdering English villains, I come here to see my boy, and I dare you to hang me! If you do, General Washington will string up a dozen of redcoats for me."

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed Phil, as he recognized his mother's voice, "that is mother, and now I must work for her!"

Moll Pitcher had been captured by the English horsemen, while Randy Marvin escaped in the wood.

Phil Pitcher had commenced to think that there was something mysterious about his birth and early life on account of the words uttered by Captain Darling, but the loving lad could not think ill of Moll Pitcher, and he was resolved to look upon her as his mother to the end.

Moll was dragged into the farmhouse by two of the troopers. Her arms were well secured, but they could not stop her

tongue, although Captain Darling threatened to hang her on the nearest tree as a spy in disguise.

That young officer appeared to be highly delighted at the capture of the brave woman, and so was Gideon Grimes.

They both hated her on account of her bravery in battle and for personal reasons as well.

The English officer had been looking for the woman for more than a year, and her action at the Battle of Monmouth had brought her to his notice, although he had been on her track before then.

The Tory captain hated the woman because she fought on the right side, as well as for daring to attack him in his own camp.

All the Tories and troopers were delighted to know that the famous heroine was in their power, and they fully expected to see her dangling from a tree that night.

Moll Pitcher had an object in speaking so loud while being dragged into the house as she wished to let her boy know that she was in trouble.

She was at once dragged into a private apartment, where she was confronted by Captain Darling, who had a stern expression on his handsome countenance.

There was a gleam of triumph in the young officer's eyes as he stood before the woman and addressed her in cold tones, saying:

"And so you are the woman now known as Moll Pitcher?"

Moll glared back at the young man in the most scrutinizing manner, as she said to herself:

"He does look like his father very much, and they are both born villains. He won't get much out of me, though he may string me up."

"Speaking aloud, Moll said:

"Yes, Moll Pitcher is my name, and I am not ashamed of it, either."

"You had another name in years gone by?"

"To be sure I had, for I was a young girl once, and I had my maiden name."

"But your late husband had another name."

"Who told you that?"

"I know it and I know you. I also know that the young man who was my prisoner is not your son."

Moll bridled up on the instant, and answered in very angry tones, crying:

"That's a lie for you, if you mean Phil Pitcher, the brave boy who fights in the Virginia cavalry when he is able to do it!"

A grim smile passed over Captain Darling's face, and he responded, saying:

"There is no use in beating about the bush, so let us come to terms at once. I know who you are, and I think you know me also."

"If I did know you, I don't think I would know much good of you, judging by your looks; but what business do you want to settle with me now?"

"You know that you are arrested as a spy, and that you are to be put to death."

"Not before I have a fair trial."

"You were caught in disguise inside our lines, and that is cause enough to treat you as a spy."

Moll was well posted on the rules of war and on the locality as well, and she answered:

"What do you call your lines?"

"The spot we are now standing on takes in the English lines."

"If you knew as much about the country as I do you would know that the place around here is what the army men call neutral ground. Sometimes one side hold it with a troop like yourself and sometimes the other. Bad cess to me, if you

may not be rattled out of here by some of the brave lads on our side before an hour is over your head."

The English officer knew that Moll spoke the truth, as Westchester was for years regarded as neutral grounds by the Americans and the English.

He desired to frighten the woman, however, for an object of his own, and he said:

"You were spying on us here in disguise, and that is death for any man or woman caught in the act."

"Well, then, give me a fair trial before a court of officers, and that's all I ask; but don't let those Tories try me, bad cess to them!"

"The Tories will try you and hang you, too!" said Gideon Grimes as he stepped into the room, carefully closing the door after him.

Moll Pitcher cast a scornful glance at the Tory leader and then grinned defiantly at him as she replied:

"I know the likes of you would like to hang the likes of me, but it is you who will suffer in the long run by your treachery to your country and your kind."

Gideon Grimes raised his hand in a threatening manner and scowled fiercely at the brave woman, but Captain Darling interposed, saying:

"Be quiet for the present as I have something serious to say to this woman."

"What is it, then?" asked Moll.

"It is about the young man you call your son."

"What of him, then?"

"You know that he is a prisoner here in my power."

"To be sure I do, or I wouldn't be here to see him."

"I want to tell you that I will release him and yourself also on one condition."

While thus speaking Captain Darling cast a warning glance at Gideon Grimes as if he meant to say:

"Don't you interfere, as I have no notion of doing what I say."

Moll was on the alert at the proposition, and she at once inquired:

"What condition do you mean?"

"You think a great deal of the boy, I presume?"

"Why shouldn't I, as he is the apple of my eye?"

"And you wouldn't care to see him put to death?"

"I'd like to see the one who would dare put him to death, for you can't say that he is a spy, whatever I may be."

"He is in our power at present, and so are you, but I make you a fair offer, woman."

"What is that offer?"

"Tell us honestly who he is, and the name of his parents, and we will release you both."

Moll knew that the young scoundrel was trying to draw her out, but she pretended to entertain the proposition, and she answered:

"I'd do a good deal to save my boy and myself also, but I'd like to have a talk with him first, and in secret, mind you."

Captain Darling nodded as if he had gained a great point, and then turned and conversed with the Tory captain in subdued tones.

Gideon Grimes then left the room, saying:

"I will bring the young fellow here."

Captain Darling closed the door after the Tory, and addressed Moll in cautious tones, saying:

"See here, my good woman, you might as well admit at once who you are and all about your adopted son, as I can hang you upon more charges than one."

"What can you hang me for, only that I love the country that gave us shelter?"

"I can prove that you stole the boy when he was a very little fellow, and that is a hanging matter, when we want to

make it so. If you want to save your neck, tell the whole truth before witnesses, and——"

The officer was interrupted by startling cries outside the apartment, and then Gideon Grimes rushed in, crying:

"Tarnation take it, the young imp has escaped from the room, and he is not to be found in the house."

"Escaped!" thundered Captain Darling as he sprang to the door.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" yelled Moll Pitcher. "If my brave boy has escaped, and I feel that he has, I pitch you all to the mischief now!"

Captain Darling rushed out like a madman, as he yelled to Gideon Grimes:

"See that that woman does not escape, and we will treat with her hereafter!"

The officer then called on his troopers to search the house and grounds around it, while others rode to and fro in quest of the late prisoner.

At that very moment Phil Pitcher was standing in a sheltered spot in the orchard back of the house, and Edith Grimes was beside him, saying:

"I fear that you cannot rescue your mother to-night, and I would advise you to be off now before they come out after you. Here's a weapon for you, and do take my advice."

Phil took the sword handed him by the girl, who continued, saying:

"You will find a good horse in the lane below, and be off with you!"

Phil shook his head in a stubborn manner and replied in firm tones, saying:

"My mother did not desert me in trouble, and I would be a cur to desert her. She worked for me, and now I will work for her."

Loud cries were heard in the farmhouse at the moment, and Edith pushed the young hero toward the end of the orchard, as she implored:

"For mercy's sake, fly now, and you can save your mother hereafter!"

"No, no! I know what they are up there and what they think of my mother. If I hesitate or delay she will be put to death as a spy, as I know what the Tories are too well to trust them. I will save my mother before I leave her, or I will die with her!"

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD FOES MEET AGAIN.

Sally Friend, as we will call her, had an object of her own in aiding in the release of the young prisoner.

The ugly girl was all powerful at the farmhouse, as the Tories there feared her, and she was just the one to use her influence with such men.

It was through that influence that a horse had been supplied for Phil Pitcher, and Edith permitted to see the young fellow in the orchard.

The Tory's good daughter was still disguised as a boy, and only a few of the men around had recognized her while she was saving her uncle from the rope.

Gideon Grimes had not seen his daughter since he returned with Moll Pitcher, and Edith proposed to keep out of her father's way as long as possible.

The Tory leader was as anxious to secure the prisoner again as Captain Darling could be, while he little dreamt that Sally had aided in his escape.

He did suspect his daughter, however, and he inquired for her of Sally soon after the alarm arose.

Sally replied that she did not know what had become of Edith, and concluded by saying:

"I brought her in here and she slipped away while I was getting some supper ready for her."

The two men guarding the door where the prisoner was confined were Sally's old friends, and she knew that they would not betray her on certain points.

Gideon Grimes then continued by asking Sally:

"Did my gal see the young prisoner?"

"How could she see him, except she looked up at him while he stood at the window?"

"I don't know how it is, but I am thinking that we have traitors around here," growled the fierce man as he started out to lead some of his men in the hunt for the young fugitive.

All the fighting men at the farmhouse were wide awake that night, as it was known that a troop of patriot horsemen were in the neighborhood.

Captain Darling had heard of the troop while he was out scouting that evening, and he also learned that they were composed of patriots in the neighborhood and a detachment of Virginia cavalry.

The young English officer had encountered the Virginia horsemen at the battle of Monmouth, when they charged through his troops, and when he succeeded in first capturing Moll Pitcher's boy.

He had a desire to meet them again in battle array, as he had an old grudge against their captain.

Captain Hardy, of the Virginia cavalry, had visited England a few years before, and he there became engaged in a quarrel with Captain Darling.

They were old foes, and it was not at all probable that they would become friends.

While treating with Moll Pitcher that night, and while sending his men out to hunt for the escaped prisoner, the young English officer was very careful to guard against a surprise.

He had his scouts out along the road, and watchful eyes were on the lookout against a surprise, while all his troops were ready to mount and charge at the slightest warning.

The escape of the daring scout and spy served to increase the Englishman's anxiety, as he knew that Randy Marvin and Captain Hardy were fast friends.

Edith continued to push Phil Pitcher down toward the lane, when the alarm cries were heard, and she continued her appeals to him, saying:

"I just heard to-night, from one of father's friends, that Captain Hardy was in the neighborhood. Why not hasten away to him and bring him here to rescue your mother, as I know that all the patriots think the world of her?"

The suggestion was a good one, and it had an effect on the young fellow.

He knew that it would be almost madness for him to attack his enemies single-handed, and he only thought of rescuing his mother by strategy.

All the martial fire in his soul was aroused on hearing that his friends were near, and he pressed the girl by the hand in the most tender manner as he said to her:

"That settles it, and now I will away on my horse to seek my own brave friends."

"Good-by, then, until we meet again."

"We'll meet again."

Edith followed the young man to the lane and a sigh of relief escaped from her as she saw him dash away down toward the river.

Some of the Tories were then hurrying down through the orchard, and alarm cries rang out on all sides, while the mounted troopers dashed to and fro along the roads and fields in quest of the fugitives.

Some of them soon caught sight of the young fellow as he rode along the river path, and the chase set in in right earnest, one of them crying:

"There he goes! There he goes! This way, Captain Darling, and we'll catch the rascal!"

Captain Darling stood ready to mount at the moment, and away he galloped after the others.

About six of the troopers joined in the chase, and the Tories mounted also to be ready to cut the hunted youth off in case he was driven back to the farmhouse.

Phil Pitcher was not well acquainted in the neighborhood, but he did know that the upper road led toward the American scouting parties.

When the troopers dashed down at him he faced his horse up toward the main road, trying him over one or two leaps before he said to himself:

"This is a good one, and I can trust him to cross the country in good style."

Phil reached the main road ahead of the troopers and he then let his horse out at full speed, holding a sword ready to cut his way through any of the enemy who may attempt to oppose him.

A horseman soon rode toward him, and Phil could notice that he was an English trooper.

"Halt!" cried the man as Phil drew near. "Who comes there now?"

"Find out!" cried Phil as he dashed at the fellow who had drawn his horse up in the centre of the road.

Captain Darling was riding after Phil at the time, and the officer yelled aloud to the trooper:

"Stop him! stop him! but don't fire or slay him on your life!"

The trooper attempted to meet Phil's charge by striking him from his horse, but the active young fellow dashed the sword aside, flinging the man from the saddle at the same time, as he rode on, crying:

"Thank fortune I am able to use both hands again and ride as well as ever!"

Then on he went, with Captain Darling and six or seven of the troopers in close pursuit, the former yelling:

"Halt, or we will fire!"

"Fire and be hanged to you!" yelled Phil. "And I'll give you fits soon if you injure a hair of my mother's head!"

"If you do not surrender we will hang your mother in an hour, you young fool!"

"I'll be hanged if you do without a brush for it! Get along with you, good horse, and let us see what you are made of on this level road."

The young fugitive struck the horse with his sword while speaking, and he then discovered that he had been supplied with a fleet animal.

On and on went the exciting chase, but Phil was drawing away from his enemies.

Captain Darling was well mounted, however, and he spurred his horse for all he was worth, while he foamed with rage at the thought of his prize escaping him.

The English officer soon left the troopers far behind, but he could not gain on the fugitive, while he groaned forth:

"Would to heaven that some accident would happen to that horse, and the mischief take the traitor who gave him to the young rascal!"

They had ridden about three miles from the farmhouse when Phil perceived another horseman riding out from a wood ahead of them.

The young fellow was then some distance ahead of Captain Darling, and he said to himself:

"If this is another Englishman I must make short work of him!"

Phil drew his horse up a little, grasping his sword with a stronger grip as he continued to say:

"The man ahead does not look like an English trooper as far as I can see now."

The man ahead galloped toward Phil at a leisurely gait,

until he was within hailing distance, when he called out, in manly tones:

"Who comes there?"

Phil recognized the voice on the instant, and joyous were the tones in which he replied.

"A friend, indeed, Captain Hardy, and it is glad I am to meet you!"

Captain Hardy pressed on to meet his friends as he responded, crying:

"Welcome, welcome, my brave fellow! And who is this riding after you?"

"Captain Darling, an officer in command of the English troop, who held me as a prisoner."

"Captain Darling!" exclaimed the young Virginian, in fierce tones.

"Yes, yes; and he has several of his friends riding after him. Have you friends near, captain?"

"Yes, I have friends near, as some of our fellows are back there in the wood."

The two friends were riding on together at the time, and Captain Hardy cast his eyes back to watch the enemy, as he remarked:

"I do not see any of his men riding on with him."

"They have fallen behind a little, but they are close at hand, I assure you."

"They are far enough behind to suit my purpose, and I am going to meet that scoundrel single-handed. Remain here with the boys, and come on with them if you see any of his men appearing."

At a signal from the young Virginian several mounted men dashed out from the wood, and among them was Randy Marvin, the spy.

"Halt here until I return!" cried Captain Hardy, as he rode back to meet his old foe.

"What are you about, captain?" cried Phil, as he galloped after his officer.

"I am about to meet a rascal I hate, and you ride back to the men unless you see the English riding at us while we fight."

Being thus ordered, Phil drew back to his friends, who received him in a joyous manner.

Captain Darling then rode back at a gallop as he said to himself:

"Would that I had my troop here now and I would crush those rascals!"

A voice then rang out to him, crying:

"Captain Darling, if you have a spark of manhood in you turn and fight me!"

The Englishman recognized the voice, and he turned his horse again as he answered:

"I will meet you, you miserable Yankee, on foot or on horse, single-handed or at the head of my troop, if you name but the day and the hour!"

"This is the hour, and let us at it like men, you English hound!"

While thus speaking Captain Hardy drew up before his enemy and brandished his sword aloft.

Captain Darling looked back and he perceived five or six of his troopers galloping along the road.

Then, drawing his pistol, he took aim at his enemy as he cried:

"Thus do I treat rascally rebels!"

CHAPTER XV.

TO MOLL PITCHER'S RESCUE.

Captain Hardy perceived the treacherous movement on the part of his enemy, and he bent down over his horse's neck, drawing a pistol at the same time.

The animal under the brave Virginian sent forth a groan as the shot was fired, and he then staggered forward and fell.

His young rider sprang to his feet, firing at the same moment, as he cried:

"You were always a treacherous rascal, Darling, but I'll be in with you now!"

The English troopers sent up a shout as they heard the shots, and galloped toward their captain at full speed. He turned his horse toward them just as the Virginian fired, crying:

"I will meet you, man to man, at the head of some of my brave fellows!"

Captain Hardy did not hit his enemy, and he dashed after him on foot, yelling aloud:

"Come, my brave boys, and we will meet the rascals, man to man!"

Phil Pitcher and his friends on the road were then galloping forward, while several horsemen dashed out through the wood to back their captain.

When Captain Darling reached his men he could perceive that the Americans far outnumbered him, and he galloped back toward the farmhouse, crying:

"The hounds are too many for us and we will ride back at full speed for the others!"

Then away rode the Englishmen, as Captain Hardy yelled after them:

"I will chase you when I get another horse, and I will meet you to-night again, you treacherous cur!"

A shout of defiance was the Englishman's only reply to the threat, and away he went, feeling certain that he would have to encounter his enemy again that night.

Captain Hardy soon procured another horse, and he mustered his troops around him, crying:

"We will chase the English dogs to their camp. What about your brave mother, Phil?"

"She is a prisoner in the hands of the English, and they threaten to hang her for a spy within an hour."

"Then we will to her rescue at all hazards! Forward, men, to the rescue of Moll Pitcher, the heroine of Monmouth!"

"To the rescue of Moll Pitcher!" sang out the troopers as they pressed on with the son of the woman who was the idol of the army.

Captain Hardy's troop numbered some forty men, and they were all well armed with swords and pistols, while they were most eager for a struggle with the English.

There was one man among them, however, who was not carried away by the excitement of the moment, although he was Moll Pitcher's true friend.

That man was Randy Marvin.

The spy knew that the Americans would fight at a great disadvantage if they charged boldly on the party at the farmhouse, and he rode up to Captain Hardy's side as he said to him:

"May I have a word with you, captain?"

"Certainly, Randy."

"Then I would say to you that it will be very unwise to tackle the English skunks openly."

"How is that?"

"They outnumber you, and they will be posted at the farmhouse that I spoke to you about. The rascally Tories are there with them, and they all number eighty men at least."

"But we must rescue Moll Pitcher, Randy. It will be an eternal disgrace to us all if that brave woman is hung as a spy."

"We will rescue her if you take my advice, captain."

"What is that advice?"

"Let us move cautiously and attack them on the sly."

"How is that to be done when they are on the alert?"

"It can be done. They will be on the lookout for us here

on the road, but it will be best for us to dismount in the wood beyond here, and then steal along by the river side and surprise them on foot."

The young Virginian was at home in the saddle, and he did not relish the idea of fighting on foot, yet he perceived that the spy was right in his suggestion.

To charge down on the farmhouse against double their numbers would be very venturesome, and many brave men would be certain to fall in the fire of their hidden foes.

It was then resolved to follow Randy's advice in a certain measure, and to attack the English in a cautious manner.

No time was to be lost, however, as Phil feared that his mother would be put to death very soon.

That brave woman was in a perilous position, as Captain Darling was fearfully enraged at the escape of the young prisoner.

After riding back some distance he could perceive that the Americans held back, and he said to himself:

"The rascals fear to fall into an ambuscade, and they are retreating."

On drawing near the farmhouse the English officer could not see anything of his enemies, and he rode on, hissing forth:

"Now to deal with Moll Pitcher."

Moll Pitcher was one of the happiest women in America that night when she saw the troopers riding back without their late prisoner.

Gideon Grimes had her in charge in the kitchen of the farmhouse, and they were waging a war of words over the struggle of the day.

Moll's arms were still bound behind her, and the Tory leader kept a strict watch on her, although he permitted her to look out the front window.

When Moll saw Captain Darling riding into the farmhouse, a cry of joy burst from her and she sang out:

"Hurrah for the brave boy—my boy—who humbugged you all and got safe away to his friends."

Captain Darling sprang from the saddle and burst into the kitchen, crying:

"You infernal old hag, your boy has escaped, but you will suffer for him. Grimes, let your men get a rope and we will hang her up on the tree, back there!"

"You daren't hang me!" cried Moll, who did not appear to be the least alarmed. "I demand a fair trial and as much justice as you English can give!"

"You'll get all the justice you deserve. On with the rope around the hag's neck and drag her out to the gallows tree!"

Gideon Grimes and one of his men placed the rope around the brave woman's neck, and they were about to drag her forth when Edith ran into the room, crying:

"Oh, mercy, mercy, father! You would not hang a brave woman because she came here to save her son?"

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE REBELS ARE ON US."

Gideon Grimes had not seen his daughter since she acted in such a brave manner while rescuing her uncle.

Captain Darling was not aware that the young girl was in the place at all, as he had been too busy with Moll Pitcher and her son since the return of the scouting party.

The good girl was still disguised as a boy, as she had also been on the alert since Phil Pitcher rode away from the farmhouse.

While Edith spoke to her father, she flung her arms around Moll Pitcher's neck, and drew her back into the room, that brave woman exclaiming:

"I knew you wouldn't desert me, my good girl, and Heaven bless you for saying a word for me at this time; but I defy them."

Gideon Grimes pushed his daughter aside in a very rough manner, crying:

"Get right out of my sight, gal, or I'll do you some mischief right off."

Captain Darling then interposed, saying:

"Can it be possible that she is your daughter?"

"Yes, it is, and she is a bad girl, as I believe that she helped in getting that young rebel away."

Edith turned on her father in the most indignant manner, crying:

"I am not a bad girl, sir, and what if I did help in getting the young rebel away?"

"If I was sure of it I would choke you right here."

The Tory was springing at his daughter, when Captain Darling interposed between them, crying:

"I am in command here, Captain Grimes, and you must not touch the young lady before me."

"Maybe he would like to string the pair of us up together," replied Moll Pitcher, with a taunting laugh.

Edith embraced the woman again in the most affectionate manner, and Moll soon felt what her young friend was about.

The devoted girl was cutting the cords that bound the woman's arms while thus embracing her, while she whispered to her, at the same time saying:

"If you get a chance dash back into the orchard very soon."

"I will, my darling," whispered Moll in return.

"Stop this fooling!" cried Grimes, and out with the woman if we are going to string her up."

"No, no, father. Oh, Captain Darling, you wouldn't be so cruel as to hang a poor woman merely because she is true to her own son?"

Being thus appealed to, Captain Darling replied in kindly tones, saying:

"I hate to displease you, Miss Grimes, as I remember your kindness to me at Monmouth, but I assure you that the young man you allude to is not this woman's son, as the wicked creature stole him from his mother in Ireland when he was a little boy."

Thrown off her guard for a moment, Moll Pitcher indignantly cried:

"That's an infernal lie, if George Washington himself said it, for the dear lady gave him into my charge of her own free will."

A joyous exclamation burst from Captain Darling on hearing the confession, and he then cried:

"You all heard what the old hag said. She confesses that the boy is not her son, and that she got him from his mother in Ireland."

Moll Pitcher saw that she had committed a grave blunder, but she was not a woman to back out, and she replied, saying:

"It slipped from me, Heaven forgive me, but the angels in heaven knows that I did not mean to break my pledge to her."

"Then you do confess that the boy is my sister's child?"

"I won't confess anything to you, but it will all come out in the right time."

Gideon Grimes seized his daughter again, and dragged her away from Moll Pitcher, as he cried:

"We have heard enough; string her up!"

Sally appeared in the door of the apartment, and just then a horseman dashed up to the farmhouse crying:

"The rebels are on us!"

Then away dashed Captain Darling and his troopers up the road, thinking they were coming from that direction.

They spied several horsemen drawn up in the road, who on

seeing Captain Darling and his troopers galloped away, with the English in full pursuit.

Then up through the orchard ran some twenty men, led on by Phil Pitcher and Randy Marvin, the young man crying:

"Here we come to your rescue, mother. Girls, retreat into the house!"

Sally and Edith did retreat into the house, while over into the yard sprang the active American, Moll Pitcher's boy, crying:

"Here's at the rascals who would hang my brave mother, and down with the English forever!"

The Tories around the farmhouse were taken by surprise at that unlooked-for assault, and they fled to the front, yelling:

"The rebels are on us in the rear."

Phil Pitcher darted at the two men who held his mother, and struck one of them to the ground with his sword, firing point blank at the other at the same time, as he cried:

"Dear mother, it is my turn to rescue you now."

The Americans dashed at the Tories in front of the house, using their weapons and swords on them, and slaying several of them in short order.

Gideon Grimes saw that he was outnumbered, and he dashed along the road at full speed, with several followers, yelling:

"Come back, come back, Captain Darling!"

Randy Marvin and his friends ran after them, but could not overtake them, so they returned to the house.

The Americans were retreating toward the orchard in triumph, when Edith ran out of the house and addressed Phil Pitcher, saying:

"Good-by, Phil, as I may never see you again, and you, too, uncle."

Randy Marvin and Phil seized the young girl by the hand, the former crying:

"I'd ask you to come now, Edith, only that we have a rough time before us yet."

"I know, I know. I hope you will get safe through to your friends with the good woman."

"Heaven bless you forever, my darling!" exclaimed Moll Pitcher; "and it is I will return you thanks in some way if ever it is in my power."

"Away with you!" cried Randy Marvin. "The troopers are riding back now."

The troopers were dashing back the road, while into the orchard dashed the Americans.

Captain Darling had heard the cries and the pistol shots in the farmhouse, and he then realized that he had been fooled by the horsemen he had been pursuing.

These horsemen were mounted on fleet Virginia horses, and they could laugh at their enemies when pursued by them.

Captain Grimes soon met the English officer on the road, and he yelled aloud:

"Come back, quick, Captain. We were attacked by rebels who came from the orchard, and they have gone back that way again."

"Back it is, then."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FAIR FIGHT FOR IT.

Captain Darling rode bravely back at the head of his troop, and the beaten Tories ran after them.

"Where are the rebels?" cried Captain Darling, glaring around at the dead and wounded.

Pointing to the orchard, Sally cried:

"They have gone that way."

A scout galloped into the yard, crying:

"There are twenty-five rebels retreating on foot along by the river, captain."

"Gideon Grimes and his men mounted in hot haste, and the Tory leader was in a fearful rage as they dashed along with the troopers in pursuit of the retreating Americans.

The retreating party were making toward the wood where their friends were with horses awaiting them.

Captain Hardy had led the mounted party down the road. The brave Virginian would have charged at the enemy were it not that he had promised Randy Marvin to draw them away from the farmhouse.

Having accomplished so much Captain Hardy was burning to have a fight with the troopers, although he saw that they outnumbered his party.

On gaining the wooded retreat with Moll Pitcher and her friend, the spy addressed Captain Hardy, saying:

"Now captain, that Moll Pitcher is all right I'll tell you what I'll do with you."

"What will you do?"

"I'll give you a chance to have a fair fight with those British horsemen."

"How will you work it, as they outnumber us with the mounted Tories?"

"We'll split them up if you say so, and at them in detail."

"The cunning spy then went on to explain his plan, and it did not take him long to do it.

Having explained his plan of action, the patriot leader prepared to put the spy's trick in force.

Captain Darling felt that the Americans were not far away, and he feared an ambush.

Sending his skirmishers ahead, he ordered his troop to ride in order of battle, and to keep well on the alert.

Captain Grimes and the Tories rode on behind, and they were also prepared for a fight.

On reaching the edge of the wood, one of the horsemen ahead yelled out:

"There they go, captain!"

The skirmishers fell back, and Captain Darling was soon riding in front, when he perceived a strong body of horsemen drawn up about two hundred yards ahead.

One glance at the party showed him that his troopers far outnumbered the enemy, and he cried:

"Forward to the charge, and use pistol and steel on the rascals!"

On dashed the English, and after them rode the Tories, the latter numbering twenty men.

The Americans soon turned to retreat, as if fearing to encounter such a strong party, and Captain Darling cried:

"Charge after the rascals on the double quick, and they cannot escape."

The troopers set spurs to their horses, and galloped along at a headlong pace.

The Tories did not ride as fast, and they were soon separated from their allies.

They were still riding at the side of the wood when a wild yell burst on their ears, and then into the Tory ranks rattled a deadly volley, while a voice cried out in thrilling tones:

"Out at the traitors, and kill them to a man!"

The Tories received another stunning surprise, as they believed that the rebels had struck them in force.

Several of their men had fallen, their horses were thrown into confusion, and Gideon Grimes received a ball in the cheek.

The rascals turned to retreat in disorder, bearing their leader with them, while another volley from the woods was poured into them by half a dozen brave men stationed there under Randy Marvin.

Those men made as much clatter and noise as if they num-

bered fifty, and their execution with the pistol was simply fearful.

Several of the troopers in the rear ranks wheeled about as if to ride to the assistance of the Tories.

At that juncture the American horsemen wheeled about again, as if to dash back at their foes.

Captain Darling feared that he had fallen into a trap, and he called a halt, crying:

"Charge back, as our allies are put to rout in an ambuscade."

The troopers did charge back in some disorder, when the front rank received a volley from the spy and his men, who had time to load again.

Then on after the English troopers dashed Captain Hardy and his men, the leader yelling:

"Face about, you cowards, and give us a fair fight for it."

Captain Darling did not heed the challenge until his men were beyond the fire of those in the wood, and he had already lost several of his men.

His party still outnumbered the horsemen, however, and the English officer could perceive as much as he looked back.

Still fearing an ambuscade by another party, the troopers rode on to the edge of the wood, when their captain cried:

"Wheel about now, and we will give the rascals a fair fight for it."

The spy and his friends dashed on to the edge of the woods, also, where their horses were ready to receive them.

Hastily reloading their pistols, they sprang on their steeds and dashed out to meet their friends.

When the Americans came together a cheering shout arose from them, and then Moll Pitcher cried:

"Now for a fair fight with the villains, and show them that they are not masters of the land!"

The Americans rode on at full gallop until the edge of the wood was passed, and they were then within pistol shot of the English, who were advancing to meet them.

The Tories had reached the farmhouse in dire disorder, their captain bleeding freely from the pistol wound in his cheek.

It must be confessed that the English were disorganized also by the disasters of the night, and they were not prepared to receive the fearful onslaught of those who then charged on them.

Captain Hardy rode at the head of his men, and close behind him were Phil Pitcher and the spy.

"For old Virginia and our native land!" yelled the gallant captain, as he dashed at his foe.

The two parties came together with a rattling of pistols and a clashing of swords, and then all was confusion, strife and deadly wounds.

Yet high above the din of the conflict rang out Moll Pitcher's voice:

"Here's a fair fight for you, and now we'll see if you'll hang me up to a tree."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT WAS NOT FAIR AFTER ALL.

The two parties were about equal in numbers, when they thus closed together.

The English fought with stubborn courage that night, but they soon gave way before the headlong charge and the heavy blows of the Virginians.

Captain Darling realized that he was getting the worst of the fight, and he cried out:

"Retreat, Englishmen, and we'll form to fight them again."

"At them, lads!" cried Captain Hardy, "We'll cut them to pieces!"

At them they went, and back fell the English in disorder, until their retreat became a total rout.

It was then a helter-skelter race along the road, the Americans slaying and picking up prisoners at almost every step.

At that moment a loud bugle call fell on the ears of the pursuers, and Captain Hardy cried:

"Halt, friends, as that is a blast from an enemy coming toward the city."

The gallant Virginian spoke the truth, as a large body of English horsemen dashed up to the farmhouse while he was speaking.

Then out rushed the Tories, yelling:

"Captain Darling is fighting the rebels up there, and ride to help him."

The troop thus arriving numbered over a hundred horsemen, and they dashed on to the rescue of their friends.

They soon met Captain Darling and his beaten troopers, when the former cried:

"Have at the rascals back there, colonel, and will wheel with you."

The Americans were drawing back at the moment, securing the horses of the slain Englishmen, and tending to their wounded as well.

Captain Hardy soon saw that he could not contend against the strong force riding against him, and he ordered a retreat.

The Americans rode away in good order, and the fresh English horsemen thundered along after them.

On reaching the wood, Randy Marvin said:

"Captain, hadn't we better get in here, as I know paths that will take us to our camp in short order?"

"Just as you say, Randy, as you are our guide now."

They were about to turn into the wood, when Moll Pitcher looked around her, crying:

"Phil, my boy, where are you?"

"There was no response to the question, as Phil was not with the troop.

The excited woman became almost frantic on discovering that her boy was among the missing again, and she yelled aloud:

"Phil, Phil, my darling boy, don't say that you are in bad luck again."

"Be quiet, Moll," cautioned Randy Marvin, "as we don't want the English to trail us now, and your boy will turn up all right."

"But did any one see him fall?"

"He was riding beside me," answered Randy, "until we were close on the edge of the wood behind here."

"Then where did he go to?"

"I saw him fall out of line to speak to a boy on horseback at the edge of the wood," answered one of the horsemen, "and they rode in this way together."

"What boy could it be, and where have they gone?"

"I think it was my niece," answered the spy. "Silence, now, as the English are in the wood after us."

It was true that Phil Pitcher had turned out of the ranks to speak to Edith Grimes.

The young girl had ridden away from the farmhouse on one of her father's horses, and she had watched the struggle with painful interest until the Americans retreated.

Phil then perceived her at the edge of the wood, and he rode to meet her, saying:

"Will you not come with us now, Edith, as I know you cannot be happy with your father?"

The young girl turned her horse into the wood, as she answered, saying:

"I would like to ask you, Phil, if you should ever get my father in your power, will you spare his life?"

"You may be sure I will. But won't you come along with us?"

"I can't. I want to go back and find out whether father is really married to Sally Friend or not."

Hearing the tramp of horses' hoofs at that moment the young fellow said:

"I must join my friends now, Edith, and I hope I may see you before long."

"I hope so, Phil, and good-night to you."

Phil then turned into a path and rode along, thinking that he was striking on his friends, when he suddenly found himself surrounded by the English troopers, who had just entered the wood, and Captain Darling cried:

"You are in my power again, you young rebel, and I'll see that you don't get off this time."

The brave young patriot attempted to break through the troopers, but he was soon disarmed and overpowered.

CHAPTER XIX.

MORE WORK THAT NIGHT.

Yes, Phil Pitcher was a prisoner again, and in the power of one who was aiming for his destruction.

Captain Darling was smarting over his late defeat by his old enemy; but he was extremely delighted to find the young fellow in his hands again.

Randy Marvin soon led his friends out on an old road, and then away they went at a full gallop, Moll Pitcher looking back as she moaned aloud:

"Dear me, dear me, to think that I must leave my poor boy behind me after all."

The English troopers had not yet found their way out of the wood, when along after the Americans rode a boyish figure on a swift bay horse.

Moll was the first to perceive the horse and its rider, and she drew up with the spy to await their approach, praying that it might be her own boy himself.

She was soon disappointed, however, as Randy Marvin cried out:

"Here comes Edith now."

The disguised girl soon dashed up to them, crying:

"Ride on, ride on as fast as you can, as the English will soon be out of the wood."

"What did you do with my boy, at all?" demanded Moll, as they rode on at full speed after their friends.

"I am sorry to say that he was taken prisoner soon after leaving me, but I think that we can release him again this very night."

"How is it to be done, Edith?"

"If Captain Hardy could lead the English horsemen on a fool's errand for a while half a dozen of you could sneak around to the farmhouse and help me to rescue the young fellow."

"That's a right good idea, and I'll speak to Captain Hardy about it. Think you will be all safe if you ride back openly again by the main road, my gal?"

"I think so, sir, as I am certain father don't mean me any harm."

"Then push on with me and Moll, and I'll talk to Captain Hardy."

In the meantime, Moll Pitcher's boy was led back to the farmhouse by a small party of Captain Darling's own troopers.

The baffled officer pushed on with the remainder of his men,

as he was anxious to wipe out his defeat by crushing Captain Hardy in another quarter.

The Tories and troopers bound the young fellow to a large post, which served as a support in the roomy old kitchen, and Gideon Grimes watched them, as he grunted out:

"I'd give a good deal to know who gave you that file."

"But you'll never know it," answered the manly young prisoner, with a defiant smile on his handsome face.

Gideon Grimes suspected his daughter of assisting in the young fellow's release, but he was not angry with the young girl on that account, as such action on her part would serve her purpose.

The Tory leader moved out to the front door, and Sally followed him, as she said in low tones:

"Gid Grimes, you are the blamedest fool I ever met in my life."

"How is that?"

"I know what you have been thinking about, and what makes you treat that young fellow in such a rough manner."

Sally then went on to give her views about Phil Pitcher and Edith.

The tramp of galloping horses was heard outside as they were speaking, and Gideon Grimes whispered to Sally:

"Darn it all, here comes the troopers back now, and they will block our game."

"Not if I can help it," answered the tricky girl; "and Edith will help me."

"Go ahead, then."

Gideon Grimes moved out to the front yard, where he found Captain Darling and the remnant of his troop.

"What's up now?" inquired the Tory leader. "And why didn't you strike on the rebels again?"

"We didn't, confound them."

"How is that?"

"We have been chasing them right around here in a half circle, and Major Dixon is after them yet. Fearing that they would strike back here at you I came with my troop to guard the prisoner."

"The prisoner is all right, Captain Darling."

"I will make him safer still by taking him back to New York at once, as I have business in the city to-night. Bring him right out here at once and I will take care of him."

Gideon Grimes was much annoyed at the order, but he had to obey.

Sally and Edith heard the words uttered by Captain Darling, also.

The faithful girl gave a deep sigh, and said to herself:

"Isn't it too bad they came so soon, and Uncle Randy and the others coming to his rescue; but they mustn't give up the work if they have to follow them clear down to the Harlem River."

CHAPTER XX.

STILL AFTER HER BOY.

While Phil Pitcher was being dragged forth to be led to New York, his mother, Randy Marvin and five of the Virginia troopers were drawn up in the lane at the back of the orchard.

"Will that girl come at all?" impatiently inquired Moll Pitcher, as she stared up toward the farmhouse.

"Take it easy, Moll," answered the spy, "and here she comes now."

Edith was tripping down the orchard at that moment, and she was soon with her friends, saying:

"They are taking him off to New York."

"Who's taking him off to New York?" inquired the excited woman.

"Captain Darling; and you can soon hear them."

"How many men is Captain Darling taking with him?"

"About five or six, I think, sir."

"Then let us be after them and rescue my boy," said Moll impatiently.

The brave woman was then dressed in male attire.

On starting out from New York City in quest of her boy, Moll had taken the precaution to put on a suit of rough male attire under her proper garments, so that she could change her appearance in very short order if necessary.

She then appeared in the character of an Irishman just landed, and she wore an old cap that could be drawn down over her eyes.

While they were thus speaking, the spy could hear Captain Darling and his party riding away with the prisoner.

Moll Pitcher heard them also, and she started her horse, as she said:

"There they go, and let us be after them and rescue my boy."

Edith then returned to the farmhouse, and Moll Pitcher and her friends moved away in pursuit of the English party.

They had to move very cautiously, as they were then treading on dangerous ground.

From the farmhouse to the Harlem river, which was about ten miles, the country swarmed with Tories and parties of English troopers out in search of forage.

After riding a little distance Randy advised the troopers to ride back, saying:

"You will strike your troop by moving cautiously there to the right. We can do better, that is, Moll and I, by following her son together."

Moll did not object to the arrangement, as she was wise enough to know that her boy must now be rescued by strategy.

When Edith returned to the house her father had retired to bed, and Sally prepared to go with Edith on the journey after the prisoner, which she had persuaded Edith was the best way to rescue the young prisoner.

The cunning girl made up well as a lad living in the country, and they were both mounted on the best horses in the Tory troop.

Captain Darling pushed on with his prisoner at a round gallop, and the party did not halt until they reached a small tavern on the upper bank of the Harlem River, where they proposed to wait until daylight to cross over in a boat.

After a brief delay the English officer decided to cross the river and push on to New York with his prisoner, as he had made up his mind to bear him away to England as soon as possible.

He did succeed in crossing the river with his party, and they then pushed on down to the city.

As they neared the city daylight was breaking, and Captain Darling addressed the prisoner, saying:

"If you will give me your word of honor not to attempt an escape I will treat you as a companion and not as a prisoner."

"I will do nothing of the kind."

"Then I must put you on board an English ship as soon as possible."

The prisoner was taken to a private house on Whitehall Street that morning and placed in a room on the third floor.

The front windows of the room looked out on the Battery, which was even then a pleasant promenade for the citizens of the small city.

Phil stretched himself to rest on the bed, as he said to himself:

"Well, this is rather tough, after so much blood was spilt for

my rescue; but we had far the best of the fight, anyhow, and I don't despair yet."

The cords were removed from the young fellow's arms, but the door of the room was locked and bolted on both sides, and two English troopers kept guard in the passage.

After dinner the young prisoner was led out of the house in charge of four troopers, two of whom were Captain Darling's body servants.

The officer himself walked beside the young man, as he said to him:

"It will be of no use to you to attempt to escape, as I have others watching you around here until we reach the boat."

They were passing through the Battery, and Phil cast his eyes around at the different loungers who were strolling about.

Then a joyous feeling warmed his heart, and he said to himself:

"My friends do not forget me, and that good mother of mine is too daring for anything."

The prisoner had recognized his mother in a rough-looking Irishman who was seated under a tree smoking a pipe.

A short distance away from her appeared Randy Marvin, who had assumed the character of a sailor.

Other eyes were watching Phil at the time, as Edith and Sally had arrived in the city also to work for him.

But what inspired the lad with the greatest admiration was to perceive another character in the play on the scene.

That other character was the brave Captain Hardy, who was paying a visit to the city for a triple purpose.

The daring Virginian was spying on the English army; he was working for the rescue of his friend, and he was seeking final satisfaction from Captain Darling for insults offered to him in England years before.

The prisoner was led on board a boat at a landing in the Battery, and he was soon moving over the water of the bay toward an English vessel lying at anchor in the North River.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FRIENDS IN DISGUISE.

The English merchant vessel on which the prisoner soon found himself was about four hundred tons burden, and her crew consisted of fourteen or fifteen men in all.

Phil was then placed in a small apartment at the back of the cabin.

Captain Darling placed the two servants on guard near the door, as he said to them:

"I will have your lives if that young gentleman escapes while I am on shore this evening."

The plotting officer left the vessel soon after that, taking the two other troopers on shore with him.

The mate of the vessel and five sailors were the only others left on board that evening, as most of the crew were making merry on shore on the last night before starting on the voyage.

Two of the sailors left on board that night had been engaged for the voyage late that afternoon.

The two strangers kept together in the forecastle, the mate rested in the main cabin drinking grog, and only two Englishmen were on guard on deck.

About ten o'clock a boat pushed out from shore, rowed by two men, while one rough-looking fellow sat in the stern.

The boat made straight for the English merchantman, and the sailors on deck noticed her approaching them.

One of them hailed the boat, inquiring what business brought them there, and a rough voice replied:

"Is the captain there at all?"

"No; he is on shore."

The mate stepped out from the cabin at that moment and moved to the side of the vessel, as he inquired:

"I have charge of the vessel, and what do you want?"

"I am a poor divil that is homesick, and I want to go back with you," answered the rough man in the boat.

"Have you money to pay your passage?"

"To be sure, as I have forty pounds here in my purse."

"Then come on board, and I'll tend to you."

A rope ladder was lowered, and the homesick passenger sprang up on deck, saying:

"Bring up my boxes, boys, and I'll settle with you on board here."

The men in the boat handed up a small chest to the English sailors, and they were soon on deck themselves.

The mate stared at the would-be passenger, and he saw that he was a rough-looking Irishman.

"Come into the cabin, Paddy," he said, "and count out ten pounds to me for your passage."

"To be sure I will, but that is pretty dear, as I only want to go in the steerage."

"We won't take you for less, and none of your palaver or we won't take you at all."

"Then I'll pay it down on the nail and no more about it."

The rough Irishman spoke very loud as he entered the cabin, and Phil could hear the voice, while he said to himself:

"Blame my eyes, if that isn't mother!"

By passing into the cabin the disguised woman exchanged significant glances with the two strange sailors, and they moved toward the boatmen soon after.

On reaching the cabin the disguised woman began counting some bank notes, as she said to the mate:

"Have you many passengers on board at all, sir?"

"Only five beside yourself."

Moll stared in at the two fellows who were guarding her son, as she inquired:

"Are them two of them in there standing like dumb men over a corpse?"

"Those are two officer's servants who are watching a young fellow who is out of his mind."

"And where is the poor fellow at all?"

"He is in the small room at the end of the passage there."

"Murder alive!" cried Moll in very loud tones, "and must I go back to the old land in company with a madman?"

The mate laughed heartily at the question, and the droll expression on the creature's face, and then replied:

"I guess the young madman won't hurt you any."

"I am in dread he will, and are them chaps to watch him all the time?"

"Certainly, if he is not better when we get out to sea."

"And couldn't they move in here to take a drink of this good brandy I brought on board?"

"I suppose they can if they want to, as the young gent is locked up in his room."

The fellows watching over Phil readily accepted the invitation and stepped out into the front cabin.

"It is the finest stuff you ever tasted, as I got it from me cousin, who keeps a hotel in the city there."

The mate filled a bumper and smacked his lips after it, as he remarked:

"It is good stuff."

The two servants drank in turn, each declaring that the brandy was prime stuff.

A slight scuffle was heard on deck at that moment, and Moll drew a pistol from each pocket, as she cried:

"Now for the brave boy who will never cross the ocean in this ship!"

"Mutiny!" cried the mate, as the two strange sailors dashed into the cabin and presented pistols at the servants, while Moll covered the mate with one of her weapons, as she cried:

"It isn't mutiny at all, but fair play. Wasn't that fine brandy, and don't you feel the good of it already?"

"The infernal stuff is drugged!" gasped the mate, as he staggered back and fell to the floor.

Phil's two guards reeled at the same moment, one of them gasping forth:

"We are done for, Tom!"

One of the sailors laughed heartily as he saw the two fellows falling to the floor in a senseless state, and he then turned to Moll, saying:

"That was nice work, old girl, and the fellows above are bound and gagged."

At that moment one of the boatmen rushed into the cabin, crying:

"Hurry, hurry, as there is a boat filled with sailors rowing to the ship."

CHAPTER XXII.

A FIGHT FOR IT.

Phil's friends were a little alarmed at the boatman's words, and they hastened to break in the door of the apartment where the young fellow was confined.

The young fellow sprang out and embraced his mother, as he inquired:

"How did you work it?"

Captain Hardy was one of the pretended sailors, and he soon commanded the party on the instant, saying:

"We have no time for explanations now, as a boat full of sailors are pushing this way, and we may have to fight for it before we get away."

"Then out with us!" said Phil, as he sprang out into the outer cabin and seized a sword and pistol hanging there.

The two boatmen who had assisted Moll Pitcher were American seamen who had lately escaped from an English war vessel.

Phil and his rescuers were soon on the deck, where the English sailors were lying, bound and gagged.

At that moment a voice from the water hailed the ship, crying:

"Is all well on board there?"

"All is well," answered Captain Hardy at once.

The boat contained eight sailors belonging to the merchantman, and their captain, together with Captain Darling and four English troopers.

The sea captain did not like the appearance of things on board as he neared his vessel, and he called on the others to be ready for a fight.

The boat had scarcely struck the vessel when those on board sprang suddenly upon the bulwarks and sent a volley from their pistols into the English, Captain Hardy crying:

"Hurrah for Washington, and Liberty forever!"

The volley caused sad havoc among the English in the boat, as three of the sailors therein and two of the troopers were either killed or wounded.

"Mutiny—mutiny!" yelled the sea captain as he sprang upon the deck of his vessel. "In at them, my lads, and down with the mutineers!"

Captain Hardy and his friends sprang into their own boat at the same time, the leader crying:

"Give them another volley and then away with you!"

The Americans sent another volley into the English boat from their pistols.

The boatmen then seized the oars, and so did Randy Marvin and Captain Hardy, the latter crying:

"Now away with you for dear life!"

A yell of rage burst from the English, some of whom were springing on the deck after their captain.

Captain Darling's voice was then heard yelling:

"The rascals are flying; let us pursue them! Fire on the scoundrels!"

Some of the English sailors did fire at their foe, but the balls flew wild.

The English sea captain then sprang back into his yawl again, crying:

"Man the oars and give chase to the pirates, as they must have murdered my men left on board!"

The tide was running in, and away toward the Jersey shore swept the boat containing Moll Pitcher and her friends.

The English boat was soon in motion after it, six stout sailors pulling on as many oars.

The English frigates lying in the harbor sent up signals on hearing the shots near the merchantmen and boats were pushed out from two of them.

Moll Pitcher sat beside her boy in the stern of the boat, and she said to him:

"This is the closest work we have had yet, my boy!"

"So it is, mother."

"The villains behind us are gaining on us now, and it is a pity we haven't a gun or two to put a stop to them."

"Load your pistols and fire at them again when they come within range!" cried Captain Hardy.

"I'll load for you all," said Moll, "and hand them back here to me."

The pistols were handed back to Moll by the four rowers and she commenced to load them as she remarked:

"The rogues are gaining on us again, and pull for dear lives, boys!"

One of the sailors cast his eyes ahead and then responded, saying:

"One more burst for it, boys, and then we'll strike on the shore ahead of them!"

"Then row it is!" said Randy Marvin.

"I am pulling as I never pulled before!" replied Captain Hardy, who was puffing from the unusual exercise.

Captain Darling's voice then rang out, crying:

"Give the rascals a volley now!"

The Englishman fired as he gave the order and the two troopers fired with him.

The sea captain had manned one of the oars as his crew were short-handed, although he had released the sailors on deck, who had been secured by the patriots.

One of the bullets from the English boat struck the seat near Moll Pitcher, and she turned to Phil, saying:

"Let us try our hands with the pistols now!"

"All right, mother."

They fired together, and a cry of agony from the pursuing boat told that one of the shots had found its mark at least.

Another yell of rage burst from the Englishmen, which was re-echoed by the crew of a boat in an English man-of-war, following after.

Moll cast one anxious eye toward the shore, as she said to her boy:

"Let us fire again, as it is a pity we can't stop them altogether."

"Fire again it is, mother!"

The pistol shots rang out again, Captain Darling and one of the troopers responding in the same manner.

"We are on the shore now, and then for the woods!" cried one of the American sailors.

"A dash for it, then!" cried Captain Hardy, "and then to the woods together!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Moll as the boat struck the shore. "And now we'll see who has the best legs!"

The Americans seized their pistols again and sprang on shore to dart into the wood not many yards away.

The fugitives soon reached an old road running along the shore, and Captain Hardy then said:

"We had a fight and a chase on the water for it, and now I think we'll have a chase on shore."

"That's a fact!" remarked Randy Marvin, "as I hear them coming on after us."

"They are yelling like mad Injins," said Moll Pitcher, "but we will have the laugh on them at last."

"If we can gain the hill above, ahead of them, we are all right," responded one of the sailors.

"Then let us all put our best foot foremost and I'll wager I won't be the last man in the race," said Moll, in her droll way.

The little party dashed on together along the road, Captain Hardy warning his friends to load their pistols again, and he concluded by saying:

"Thank goodness that we all secured swords, if it does come to close quarters!"

The English struck out on the road at that time, and a fierce yell burst from them as they beheld their foes darting away toward the hill.

"Yell away, you villains!" cried Moll; "but I'll wager my life ye'll never get my boy in your hands again."

"Why, mother, you can beat us all running!" remarked Phil.

"Silence, and don't waste breath!" ordered Captain Hardy, as he gazed back at his foes. "Those sailors run like the mischief, and I only hope that Captain Darling can keep up with them, as I would like to settle with him to-night, if we must come to another fight."

"Who is wasting their breath now?" asked Moll Pitcher.

"Then be silent all until we gain the wood on the hill," said Captain Hardy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SPY LEADS THE WAY.

Over twenty active English sailors were in pursuit of the five Americans and Moll Pitcher, and Captain Darling led the party.

That young officer was not wounded as badly as he pretended to be when reporting to his general during the day, as he was then able to keep up with the active sailors.

The Americans made splendid time until they gained the foot of the hill, and they reached a wood soon after, when Randy Marvin said to his friends:

"Turn to the right, now, and I have something to propose to you, Captain Hardy."

"What is it, Randy?"

"What do you say if we play the fox with the British?"

"How is that?"

"Let us turn on them here in the wood as they ain't worth a pin at trailing, and make back to the shore again."

"That is a good plan. And do you know this locality?"

"Of course; it is my business to know every spot around here."

"Then lead the way."

While they were thus speaking the Americans were not lingering as they pushed on toward the river again.

The English party gained the wood about that time, and they paused at the edge of it as if in doubt how to proceed.

After a short consultation the English officers decided to send some of their men into the wood in pursuit of the Americans, while the others kept watch along the road.

Randy Marvin led his party along down to a swamp, across which a narrow footpath extended.

The English could not see that path from the upper road, and those who pushed into the wood could not track their enemies in the darkness.

The spy soon reached the path leading down to the swamp, and he led his friends into a grove, afterward known as the Elysian Fields.

Unfortunately for the Americans two of the English sailors were straggling along the lower road after their comrades, and they perceived the Americans returning along the swamp.

The sailors then hastened forward to the edge of the wood and informed their officers of what they had seen.

The men in the wood were then called out and the whole party started back at full speed.

Randy Marvin kept leading his friends along, and they all moved as silently as possible until they gained a point in the wood in front of which the three boats were lying.

The Americans halted inside the wood and peered out at those who were guarding the boats, while Captain Hardy remarked:

"There are two troopers and four sailors down there, and I think one of the troopers is wounded."

While thus speaking the brave Virginian cast his eye over his friends and proceeded to arrange them in the order that suited him.

"We will walk out quietly," he continued, "and fire on the foes in the order I have placed you; when we are within fair pistol range of them I will give the word and all fire at once."

The spy started a little at the moment and then bent his ear to the ground, saying:

"The English are coming back after us, as sure as fate, and they are in the wood behind us now."

"Then out with us in the boats!" ordered Captain Hardy, "and stand together like heroes!"

The Americans moved out in one column, but they had not advanced many steps before one of the English near the boat cried out:

"Who comes there?"

"Friends of America!" cried Captain Hardy. "Fire together, my lads!"

Six pistols went off together and three of the English sailors fell.

"Dash at them, now, and out with the boats!" cried Captain Hardy as he fired another pistol.

Cries of dismay burst from the startled English who survived the volleys, and the Americans were on them with their swords before they could return a shot.

The English party guarding the boat did not offer the slightest resistance when the Americans rushed on them, the survivors crying for quarter.

The two American sailors sprang into their own boat and they were the first to push out.

Moll Pitcher and her son sprang into one of the English boats, the brave woman crying:

"You can handle an oar, Phil, and so can I. Now, out with you!"

"Out with us it is, mother!"

Captain Hardy and the spy took possession of the third boat, and they were the last to push out from shore.

They were not many yards from the beach when Captain Darling dashed out of the wood, followed by the English sailors, the former yelling:

"The rascals are taking the boats! Give them a volley before they are out of reach!"

The speaker fired at the last boat while running to the water, and it so happened that he took aim at his old foe, Captain Hardy.

The American received the bullet in his right breast, but

he sprang up from the seat at once and aimed a pistol at his enemy, as he cried:

"That's one for me, Captain Darling, and now here's a return for you!"

The American fired while speaking, and a cry of agony burst from the English officer as he fell to the beach, groaning forth:

"He has killed me!"

Seizing the oar again the brave Virginian cried:

"Now, out with us, Randy!"

"But are you not wounded, captain?"

"Only slightly. Pull, pull, as the shots are rattling around us!"

Some of the English sailors ran out into the water, above their waists, to fire at the Americans, all of whom escaped uninjured except the brave Virginian.

Yells of rage burst from the English sailors as they saw the boats gliding away out of their reach, and the captain of the merchantman cried:

"The rascals cannot escape as other boats are putting out from the warships!"

The three boats were brought together when they were out of reach of the English fire, Captain Hardy saying:

"Let us into the small boat together, and then up the river with us as fast as we can!"

The brave man staggered as he stepped into the small boat, and Randy Marvin assisted him as he remarked:

"I fear you are badly hurt, captain."

"I am not, old friend; but I'll take a seat here in the stern, and Phil will pull for me."

"Willingly, sir; and sorry I will be if you are injured badly."

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

Two English boats were pushing up the river, and they soon started in pursuit of the daring Americans.

Moll Pitcher hastened to examine Captain Hardy's wounds, when she soon exclaimed:

"It is bleeding freely, but that's a good sign; and I don't think the ball is inside at all."

The good woman then hastened to stop the bleeding, as she remarked:

"I think you did for Captain Darling that time, my brave man."

"I can't say that I am sorry, Moll, as I had reason to hate the rascal."

"What did he do to you at all?"

"He insulted me grossly in England three years ago, and he stole a young lady from me by a trick that no gentleman could use."

At that time the boat was gliding along by the Jersey shore, and the pursuers had given up the chase.

Two hours afterward the Americans landed near a fort on the Jersey side of the river, which was held by the Americans.

When the friends entered that fort, George Washington was the first to receive them, and the noble general soon held a consultation with the wounded officer.

On the following day Randy Marvin and Phil Pitcher crossed over to the New York side, in disguise, and made their way to the neighborhood of the old farmhouse.

The scout set out to watch the place as he said to his young friend:

"If my niece is there, as I told her to be, I will bring her back with me."

The spy returned in about an hour after, and Edith was with them.

The young girl was weeping, and Phil inquired:

"What is the trouble, Edith?"

"My father died last night. He was not a good man, but he was kind to me."

"And what has become of Sally?"

"She remained down in New York, as she could not get away again, for I had taken her pass," answered Edith.

They did not hear any more about the cunning girl, as she was never seen thereafter by her old friends.

Phil and his friends returned to the fort that night, where they were all received by Moll Pitcher in the most happy manner.

That brave woman continued with the American army until the close of the war, and she was afterward rewarded by Congress for her bravery at the battle of Monmouth.

Captain Hardy recovered from his wound, but the brave soldier fell afterward, while making a raid on the Tories in Westchester County.

Randy Marvin acted as a spy and a scout to the end, and he then retired to his farm in New Jersey, with his niece, Edith Grimes.

At the close of the war Moll Pitcher held a serious conversation with her adopted son, when she informed him that he was heir to a title and a large property in Ireland.

"I didn't want to tell you before, my boy," she said, "because you couldn't go over there for it."

"Then why did you bring me away from Ireland when I was a little boy?"

"Because your good mother, who was Captain Darling's sister, was afraid that old Lord Darling would rob you and ruin you before you were a man. He had charge of the property, by law, but he couldn't sell anything until you were of age. Your mother was afraid that he would get you under his thumb while you were a boy, and that was why she begged me to take charge of you as she lay on her dying bed."

"Where was my father, then?"

"He was shot three months before, and I firmly believed it was Lord Darling put him to death."

"Then would you advise me to go back and look after the property?"

"By all means, as I hold the papers to prove that you are entitled to the property and to an English title, too, if you want it."

"Not much, mother, as I have won an American title for myself that is better by far."

The young man did go to Ireland to recover his estate, which, he succeeded in doing after a good deal of trouble.

On his return to America Phil paid a visit to a certain farm in Jersey, where he was warmly received by Edith and her uncle.

In less than three months after there was a happy marriage in that old farmhouse, and Moll Pitcher and Randy Marvin were present when Edith became the young soldier's wife.

The brave woman lived with her adopted son until the close of her life, and she called him her boy even when he had sons and daughters growing up around him.

[THE END.]

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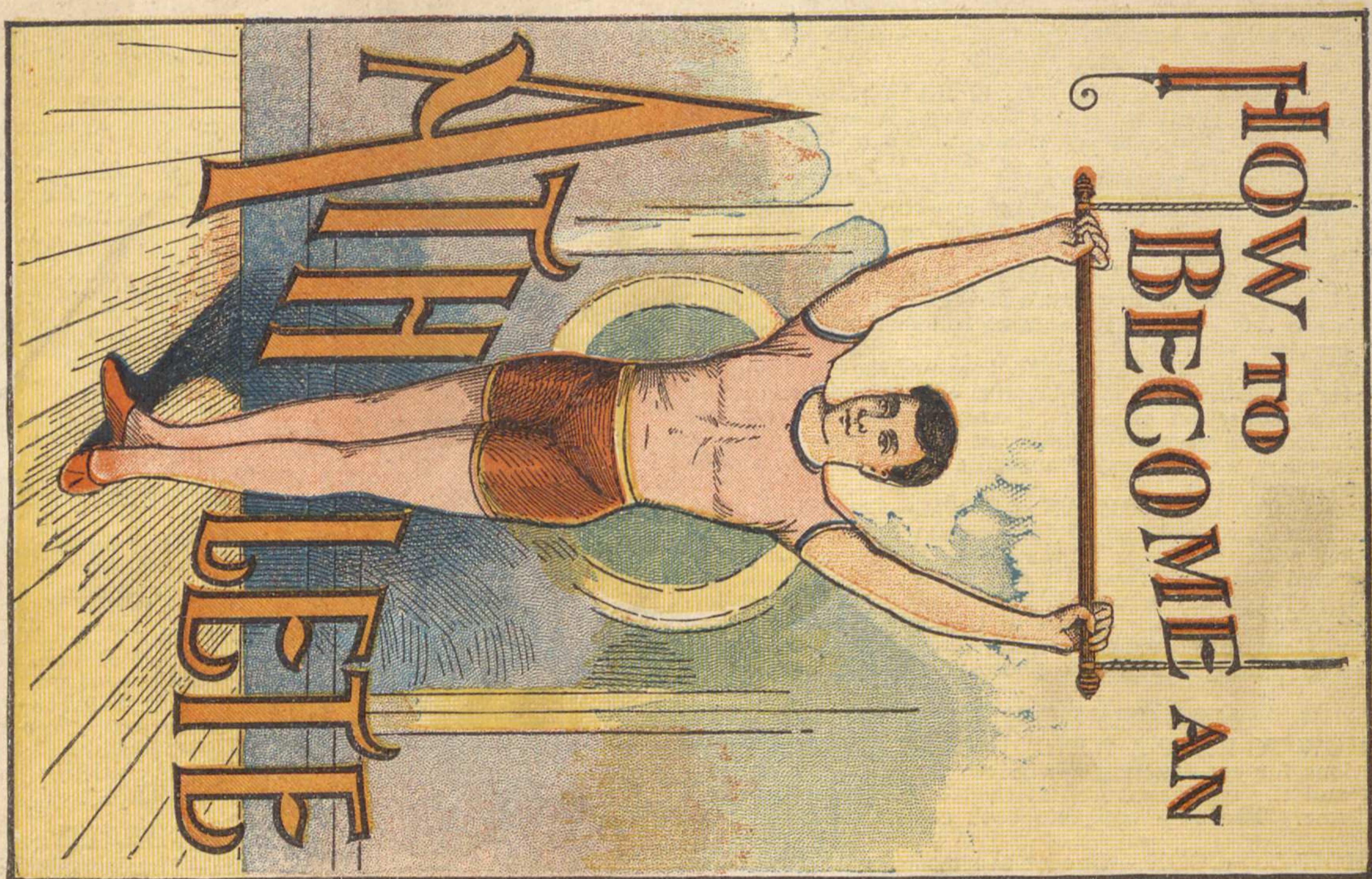
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